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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 541. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 13TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

WHEN A WOMAN

AND A MOUSE MEET,

which is the more frightened, the woman or the mouse? This was a subject proposed for a Debating Society. History does not record what the result was, whether the members in their wisdom settled this most important question. We are sure the mouse would be frightened beyond words to tell, and we have ourselves seen a lady mount a chair, and shriek for fear of a mouse more frightened than she. There is another question that can be more easily answered; when a person suffers from Indigestion, Wind on the Stomach, Biliousness, Liver Complaints, Spasms, Sick Headache, Costiveness, etc., what is the best remedy? In chorus all reply, why, Page Woodcock's Wind Pills!

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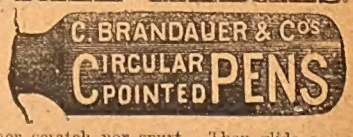

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"There is no 'If.'"

When Tom Whitehead was advised by his doctor to go to a hydro at Harrogate and take the waters, he was very fractious about it.

He had been ill for six weeks, and now he was convalescent he seemed to consider it a personal injury on someone's part that he could not go back to his office at once.

Far from doing so, he was told he must go away for another four or five weeks, if he wanted to be thoroughly strong and well again.

"I hate hydros," he remarked testily at the doctor's suggestion. "If I must go, why can't I go to a hotel?"

"You can if you like, but if, as you say, you are obliged to go alone, you will be much better at a hydro. You will get more attention and more company."

"Hydros are always crowded with uninteresting people who fuss you about," he grumbled.

"Not at this time of the year. They never get full until Easter, and you can just get four weeks in nicely. After that you may finish off with a week at the sea."

"What on earth is to happen at the office?" he asked frowning.

"The office will not suffer nearly as much in the long run, as it will if you do anything rash now."

"Am I to take the waters?"

"Yes, and the baths. They will do you more good than anything. If you take my advice, you go to the Harrogate Hydro on Thursday. It is the nearest to the pump room and very comfortable."

So with an unwilling grace, Tom gave in, and the following Thursday he was half lifted from a cab, and helped up the steps by two men into the large hall of the Harrogate Hydro.

They placed him in a chair, and he looked round grimly enough.

Then the manageress came forward, with a kindly, sympathetic manner, and asked him if he would like a cup of tea in his room, or at once, before he went upstairs.

He said he would have it upstairs, and waited impatiently while the lift was rung down, and his luggage brought in.

Three or four ladies were passing through the hall. Two were of the middle-aged, motherly type, and they looked at him pityingly as he sat huddled up in a fur coat and rugs. It annoyed him considerably, for of all things, and in flat contradiction to the characteristics of his sex, Tom hated to be pitied. He was horribly afraid they would come and speak to him, so he almost glared at them as they passed.

The third was a merry-faced girl, with a rough head of curly brown hair, and two laughing brown eyes. She looked about seventeen, and when she discovered the newcomer she regarded him with undisguised curiosity. She had come to look for letters, and after searching the pigeon holes, remarked to a young assistant manageress standing near:

"No luck at all to-day. No letters, no golf, and no billiards. Awful Tommy Rot, isn't it?"

She wore a cycling skirt, and as she spoke she stood with her hands tucked in the two front pockets, balancing herself on her heels.

"I played 'Dot-and-Carry-One' last night, as there was nothing better procurable," she went on. "You know, the man with the squint. He's a bit balmy on the top-knot."

Her companion laughed, for in spite of her unorthodox way of expressing herself, there was something undeniably attractive about her, and she had a charming voice.

Tom grew still more scowling, however, and stared at his boots.

He hated girls who talked slang, and, according to his views, made a boast of being unladylike.

The fourth personage would have gone unnoticed, only she, too, came in search of letters, and as she passed him, he caught sight of a particularly dainty little foot in a particularly dainty little slipper.

Tom had a keen eye for the beautiful, so he looked up at the owner.

She was dark and rather short, but well proportioned and well dressed. She carried herself with a small air of importance which rather contradicted the otherwise almost girlishness of her face and figure.

She had her back to him, but when she turned round, he saw she looked slightly frail, and had a beautiful complexion. Tom liked her.

She appeared to him aristocratic, neat, and smart, and that was the type of woman that happened to please his bachelor fancy at that period.

When she had hastily run through the letter she had found, she looked up from it suddenly, and her eyes met his. They were blue-grey, fringed with dark lashes, calm, cool, and penetrating.

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For a moment she regarded him with steady scrutiny, then she turned her back to him again and spoke to the other two.

At that moment the hall-porter came forward to help him to the lift and he got up. As the boy closed the gates and the lift slowly rose, he heard a bright voice remark.

"Looks jolly down on his luck, doesn't he? I wonder how he'll like having fifteen females dangling about him, seeing he keeps his feet warm and doesn't get into draughts."

Tom ground his teeth together and swore a solemn oath that the fifteen females should go to—the tropics first.

For three days he remained in his room, which happened to be a very comfortable one, with a good view, but on the fourth he ventured down about twelve o'clock. He was sufficiently better to be able to walk by leaning on a stick, and, finding the hall empty, he dragged himself to the winter garden. That was deserted also, so he made his way to the reading-room, and was soon comfortably ensconced in a large easy chair with The Times.

No one came near him, and he began to feel reassured about the fifteen females, whom he could not quite banish from his mind.

Suddenly the door was thrown open boisterously, and an unmistakable voice remarked, "I haven't time now; I've got a beastly letter to write. I'll have a hundred up after lunch."

When she discovered the occupant of the easy chair, she stood still and faced him a moment, then said frankly: "I hope you're better."

Tom looked up from his paper with a somewhat rigid face but it relaxed a little at sight of flushed cheeks and shining eyes glowing after healthy exercise.

"Thanks, I'm getting on nicely," he replied.

"Shall you be downstairs this evening, do you think?"

"No, I think not," growing stiff again.

"Because we're trying to get up Progressive Whist," she continued, undaunted, "and I thought you might like to play. A shilling a head and three prizes. First, second, and booby."

"Thanks; I think I won't play to-night," decidedly, as female solicitudes ad libitum loomed in the distance. Then he glanced suggestively at his newspaper.

"All right. It's rather slow. Such a lot of old fossils join who don't know one card from another," and she turned to a writing table.

As soon as her pen was busily scratching over her paper, Tom looked up. He was getting a little tired of his own company, and Joe Heely was a very pleasing sight to the eyes, whatever she might be to the ears. Everything about her was fresh, vigorous, and unconventional. She wrote her letter bent nearly double, with her arms sprawling on the table; and Tom could just see two neat ankles and a pair of feet curled round the legs of her chair.

Occasionally she stopped short with a frown, and nibbled vigorously at the end of her pen.

Her hair looked as if nothing would ever induce it to keep tidy, indeed she was not to be commended for special tidiness in any particular, but she had a charming little tip-tilted nose, a lovely colour, and a pretty waist.

Tom took her in, in his usual deliberate fashion, and wished she talked Queen's English, as she would then have been very passable, even to his fastidious tastes.

Suddenly, in the middle of one of her onslaughts on the penholder, she looked up and their eyes met before he had time to lower his.

She hesitated a moment and then said imploringly:

"Could you tell me how to spell 'razzle dazzle'?"

Tom regarded her a trifle scornfully, then he suddenly half smiled, for something in her face was positively irresistible.

He made an attempt to help her, confessing that he was very uncertain about it himself.

"I've got that and it doesn't look right," she replied readily, "I've crossed it out twice already, too. Can you suggest something else that means the same?"

"What does it mean?"

"What does razzle dazzle mean?" in surprise. "Why you go out on the razzle dazzle. It's much the same as a beano."

"A sort of holiday, in fact."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Then why don't you call it by its proper name?"

She smiled mischievously.

"They'd think I was awfully ill if I did," she said, with amusement. "I suppose I'll have to put 'spree,' but it's so jolly commonplace," and without more ado she went briskly on with her letter.

When she had finished, folded, and directed it, she threw her pen down, heaved a huge sigh of relief, and exclaimed—

"Thank goodness that's done!"

Then she got up and prepared to depart.

Tom decided she was better than no one and detained her.

"Are there many in the hydro?" he asked, sitting up, and looking a little more congenial.

"About twenty-five altogether. The usual crew."

"What does that mean?"

"Well, the kind of people who are generally in hydros, especially this time of the year."

"I can't say I know much about them."

"No? Well I spend half the year in them, so I know just about all there is to know."

She came and balanced herself on the arm of a large easy chair in front of him, seeing he seemed inclined to be sociable.

"I'm here with my father. He's got gout or rheumatism or sciatica or something. I really don't know which, but he thinks the waters are good for it, whatever it is. There's only we two, and we trot round together, stopping about two months at each place if we like it. It's good fun here at Easter, but it's deadly dull now."

"Have you been here long?"

Tom's voice had grown almost affable.

He argued, after all, she was only a mere girl, and, in many respects, decidedly better company than the average "amiable-young-lady" type.

"Two weeks. How long are you going to stay?"

"I don't know. Not long, I hope."

"You don't like it? Well, you didn't look as if you did the first day. In fact you looked pretty sick at everything generally. You'll get on better when you feel at home. There's a good lot of fun to be had out of the people. Still," with a twinkle in her eyes, "it's pretty bad to be an invalid here."

"Why?"

"You'll get asked about a dozen times a day how you are, and if you've had your bath. You'll also have an average of seven prescriptions a week offered you. If you take my tip you'll decline the lot, because if you take

one, the giver will immediately claim a kind of right of possession over you. I know. I've tried it," and she nodded her head sagely.

"I've come to take the waters and I don't want anything else, that's very certain."

"Rather," with emphasis, "just wait till you've tried them. You can smell them long before you get there, and they taste like rotten eggs. I'd rather have the gout any day."

Tom looked a trifle gloomy, so she rallied him brightly.

"You get used to them," she said, "in fact I believe some people get to like them.

"I wonder where you're going to sit at meals"—running on—"there's a vacant seat at our table, but a cruel assortment for company. I sit opposite a man who looks in all directions at once. It makes me feel as if I was squinting myself abominably. He's got a little bit off the top too, so perhaps I shall catch that as well. I've warned Dad, but he won't move because he sits next to a nice old lady with white curls he's taken a fancy to. I make her eyes almost start out of her head sometimes. She gasps 'my dear child' and turns pale. Her niece sits opposite. She's a 'prunes and prism' miss. I just enjoy shocking them. It's ripping sport. Sometimes it almost makes the girl's hair stand on end, only it happens to be plastered down so that it can't. I nearly made the cross-eyed man look straight the other day, with fright, for he's very pally with the proper young miss.

"P'raps they'll put you next to Miss Bush. My stars! —I wouldn't be you for something if they do."

"Why?"

"Oh, she's gone clean mad over the Anglo-Israelite question. You'll have Israelites with your soup, with your fish, with your entrées, joints, everything in fact. It isn't a bit of use trying to stop her, because you can't. She can't stop herself. I had her on toast awfully yesterday. She'd had three goes at me and I'd had enough of it, so after pretending to listen for a little while, I said, 'Well if the English belong to the tribe of Benjamin and the Americans to the tribe of Manasseh, who was the father of Zebedee's children?' She was wild. She's treated me with haughty disdain ever since, which is precisely what I wanted."

"What on earth is the Anglo-Israelite question?" he asked. "I've never heard of it."

"Oh, it's some odd notion that we are the Lost Tribes of Israel. I didn't know there were any Lost Tribes before. I don't see what it matters either way. If they've been lost all these years and we've managed without them so well, they might as well stay lost. Anyhow I don't care a 'toss up' whether I'm a bit of them or not. But Miss Bush will explain," emphatically "you wait; you'll hear it all soon enough. She holds, forth in the drawing-room sometimes. She'll give you a genealogical table showing Queen Victoria's descent from King David. When she told me about it, I said that was a poor tale; my ancestors escaped in the Ark."

"There seem to be some curious people here."

"My word, yes! A regular old curiosity shop. Several of them look as if they'd been dug up. There's a man who belongs to the 'peculiar people' and a Christolian. There's an actress, a sister of mercy, and a salvationist. There's an American Oof-bird too. We call him Klondyke. He thinks I'm very 'haffable,' and says he 'ates 'aughty 'ighb rn lydies.'"

Tom's face broadened into a genuine smile. She really was the most extraordinary young person he had met, and yet she looked remarkably bewitching, gracefully poised on the arm of the chair, swinging one foot.

"What's a Christolian?" he asked, beginning to think his education must have been very much neglected.

"Goodness only knows. They're the latest thing in sects, I think.

"They do a lot of bathing and praying. Immersion, I suppose they'd call it, but they wear bathing dresses, so it's much the same thing. But you'll know them all in a day or two, you see. There's a few nice fussy old ladies who'll mother you like anything. They've got fat, doughy hands, you know the sort, and they'll hover round you like birds of prey. You'll be a perfect godsend. They just love an interesting young man invalid. I know them. They swarm in hydros. If they've got marriageable daughters they'll positively fondle you," and her eyes danced in keen anticipation.

Tom looked his disgust, and just then the luncheon bell rang.

"Can you get along all right?" she asked briskly.

"Yes, thanks. Don't you wait."

She darted off and he followed leisurely.

In the dining hall he found himself her *vis-à-vis*, but a little lower down the table. When he took his seat she nodded to him brightly, and glanced meaningly towards a rather masculine looking lady, with a high forehead and spectacles, who sat at the other end of the long table. The visitors were not all in yet, so she leant across and remarked in a low voice:

"The Lost Israelite, you're all right so far."

He smiled back and then her father, a jovial old gentleman with a red face and little twinkling eyes, claimed her attention.

A few minutes later, the swinging door was pushed open, and the girl who had first caught his fancy came in.

She wore a smart tailor made frock and a sailor hat looking even nicer than she had done before.

Tom wondered where she sat, and was not a little pleased when she took the vacant chair beside him.

She glanced at him casually as she sat down, but for some minutes took no further notice of him. At last she turned and asked:

"Are you going to venture out to-day? It's beautifully mild."

"I think not," he replied; "if it keeps fine I may attempt my first glass of water to-morrow morning."

"You are taking treatment?"

"That is what I have come for."

"So have I. It's my first experience, and I can't say I like it."

"No? Well I never expected to. I'm simply obeying orders."

"And I. I suppose we're all much in the same box this time of the year. In the summer this place is very gay, and only about half are invalids."

"You've been before, then?"

"Yes, two or three times for a change. I like a little company; it's dull in the winter, living alone."

He glanced at her left hand in surprise, and saw the plain gold circlet.

Divining his thoughts she said:

"Since my husband died I have travelled about half the year. It is very nice to be able to be independent and go alone. We married women have an immense advantage in that respect."

He took a sidelong glance at her, and she met his eyes frankly.

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"You are thinking how very young I look, I expect," she said with a charming smile; "at least, nearly everyone does."

"I must confess you surprise me," he replied. He was thinking she was the very youngest widow he had ever seen.

"I'm older than I look," she answered, with the same frankness; "it runs in our family to wear well," and she laughed a little. "Are you going to play whist to-night?"

"The young lady opposite, with her father, asked me a little while ago, and I declined."

"Miss Heely," said his companion, following his glance, "she's a nice girl. Too slangy and boisterous perhaps, but very jolly. She keeps us all going."

"So I should imagine," with a little inward smile.

She laughed softly.

"Has she been talking to you?"

"Yes, in the writing room."

"Oh, that's just Joe. She makes friends with everybody directly they come. It doesn't matter who or what they are, she samples them, as she calls it, at the first opportunity. She's very quick at summing anyone up, and if she doesn't like them, she drops them; but she's very good-natured. I'm sorry you're not going to play whist; why not change your mind? It isn't very exciting, but it passes the evening."

"You have to move about, don't you?"

"Yes, but you needn't. There's another invalid never does. They arrange accordingly."

"Does it last long?"

"No, we usually finish at nine-thirty on account of the invalids. If you decide to play you put your name on the paper in the hall, and give your shilling to whoever's managing it."

Later on Tom's name was added to the list, and, contrary to his expectations, he rather enjoyed himself.

Some of his partners were certainly very trying, but pretty Mrs. Wattham and Joe Heely were very entertaining, each in her way.

Joe said something naughty when her partner trumped her ace, and scandalised the other lady player, but she did not seem to mind at all. As she passed on to the next table, she gave him a sly glance, and said under her breath:

"Look out, Israelites are trumps." and he immediately found himself face to face with the spectacled, masculine lady.

Rather curiously he began and ended with Mrs. Wattham as his partner, and as he did not feel especially tired, he remained beside her to hear some music. No one took much notice of the performance, so they kept up a desultory conversation, and when he at last retired, they were on a fair road to becoming very good friends.

A week passed and he began to enjoy himself. Mrs. Wattham was very good company and Joe always enlivening, what little he saw of them, though the former of course was always with him at meals.

His distant manner effectually frightened off the motherly ladies, and the dreaded fifteen females sank into a trifling two or three, whom it was rather entertaining than otherwise to avoid.

One was "The Lost Israelite," as Joe called her. Another "Old Mother Rosebuds," likewise christened by Joe, and the third a spinster on the wrong side of five-and-thirty, who the same young critic said was giving up hope, but trying a last spurt. He took Joe's advice and scandalised the first at the earliest opportunity, but the other two required more careful management. The old lady, who got her nickname from a marked predilection for rose-buds in her bonnets, or rose-pink, and who dressed in an absurdly juvenile fashion, had a daughter with her of a marriageable age. She was fair, with round blue eyes and pink cheeks, and she simpered perpetually, except when she giggled outright. Joe called her "The Family Hope" because her mother had once rashly confided to her that she was very much admired by gentlemen, and she had great hopes for her. She was highly amused and entertained when she discovered the family hope was at present centred in Tom, and lost no time in chaffing him about it. The spinster he eluded as best he could, but it cost him careful forethought occasionally, and sometimes he was hopelessly victimised, to Joe's infinite delight.

But with pretty Mrs. Wattham he got on admirably. She was a clever little woman and a very entertaining companion. She was always dainty and neat, and suited his taste to a nicety. If he met her in the pump room he was decidedly pleased, for she helped to make the time fly. One evening after a few days he found her in a quiet corner of the winter-garden, and with a murmured plea, took the empty seat beside her. Their conversation became more confidential than usual, and presently his companion shewed him a photo, saying casually: "How do you like that?

"I am engaged to be married to him," she added.

Tom scanned the photo carefully.

"He's very good-looking," he said.

"Yes, very, but he's short. I'm sorry. I prefer tall men."

Tom did not reply, but continued to study the photo. He stood six foot one himself.

"He has a nice face," he remarked presently.

"Yes, and he's a good fellow."

She spoke a trifle lukewarmly, but Tom did not notice it. On the whole he was glad of the news because he liked her company very much, but he did not want their friendship to ripen into anything else, being too contented as a bachelor to want to marry. He felt they could both indulge in a passing friendship safely now, and became even more sociable in consequence. He even suggested a bicycle ride to Ripon, as soon as he was well enough, and she assented with her usual charming frankness.

Joe strolled into the recreation room presently, and discovered them in the leafy corner. Her eyes twinkled, but no one saw, and turning on her heel she made for the piano.

She ran through several operatic airs first, and then sang in a bright voice snatches of operatic songs, including "The Maiden with the Downcast Eye," continuing until Mrs. Wattham and Tom got up and sauntered towards her.

Later on she found Tom alone in the hall, and sitting on a table so that she could swing her feet, prepared to enjoy herself.

"I'm afraid I forgot to warn you in one of the most serious quarters," she began slyly.

Tom took a long whiff at his cigar and made no reply, watching the smoke curl upwards. Joe mimicked him.

"Blue-grey smoke suggests blue-grey eyes to me," she said. "What does it suggest to you?"

"Vapour," drily.

"Not bad," with a little nod of approval, adding, "I guess the blue-grey eyes don't intend ending in either smoke or vapour."

There was a tacit understanding of good fellowship between these two now.

Tom put up with Joe's slang, and Joe let him grumble to her, when he felt ill or out of sorts generally.

"You don't always guess right," he retorted, "your very limited experience often misleads you."

"Heavens," with a little gasp, "do you write books?"

"No, why?"

"Sounded a bit like it. I always suspect people who speak in measured phrases. 'Tisn't natural. I sometimes find they have the madness without the genius—a loose tile in fact.

"Mrs. Wattham isn't mad though," running on, "she's all there right enough."

"She's very nice. What's the matter with her?"

"I didn't say she wasn't."

"You implied it."

"I didn't. I implied she was clever."

"Well, you mean designing, and designing people are not nice. As a matter of fact, she's very nice. She's one of the few women you can be very friendly with without fear."

"Rats."

Tom relapsed into dignified silence, conscious that Joe's pretty mouth was politely scornful.

"It's a good race," she went on presently, "the Family Hope, the Lost Israelite, and Charming Frankness. I'll lay two to one on Charming Frankness."

"You shouldn't bet; it's unladylike."

"I'm not intended to represent an Incarnation of Propriety," she replied slyly, "though I daresay I could do the Charming Frankness trick if I tried."

"You'd do the frankness all right," looking sly in his turn.

"She might teach me the other, only it would perhaps be dangerous," audaciously.

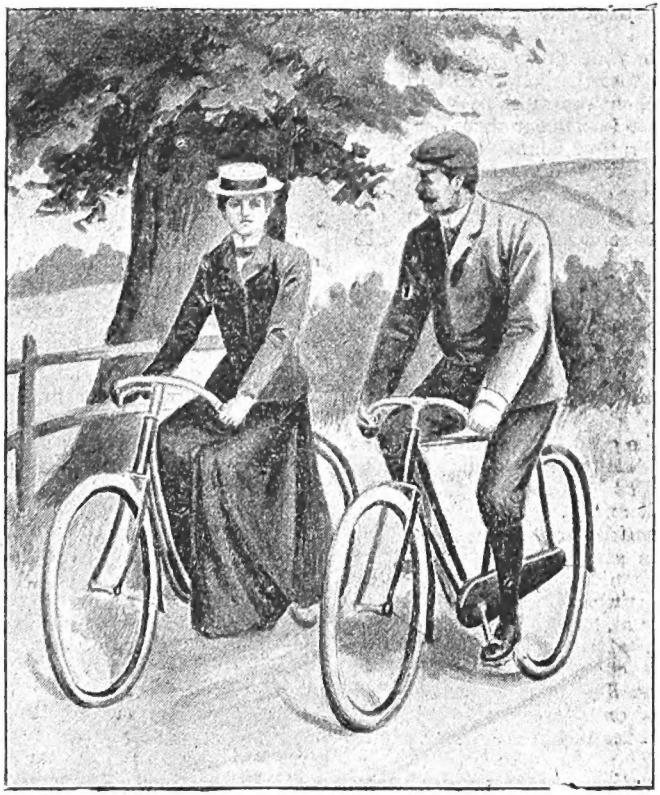
"I suppose you know you're talking arrant nonsense."

"Call it bosh. You should always suit your conversation to your listener."

"Sometimes it's an advantage for a listener to try and reach the higher standard."

"It depends. One can't live in very rarefied air. Here comes Mother Rosebuds. I'm off;—wouldn't deprive you for anything."

"No, don't go," quickly.



They bicycled together.

Joe raised her eyebrows in feigned surprise.

"You'll put up with the arrant nonsense then, if I'll keep the dragon at bay?"

"Yes, or anything else you like. She gives me the hump."

"The what?" in a horror-struck voice. "I suppose you mean a depression of the mental faculties? But perhaps you're coming down to my level?"

There was a pause, then Tom remarked casually, "I suppose you know Mrs. Wattham is engaged?"

"Whew!" and Joe answered by a low whistle.

"You didn't?"

"No, she isn't so confiding to everybody."

"Well, she is. I've seen his photograph, so now you see you were talking arrant nonsense."

"I call that a stunner," was her only comment. Then she sprang from the table, saying:

"I give it up. I'm going to see what Dad's after. I daren't leave him alone for long, because that white-haired lady's such a giddy old puss. Ta-ta," and she did a little step-dance across the hall and vanished.

That night Elsie Wattham stood a long time at her window, lost in thought. When she at last turned away she stood in front of a portrait on her chimney piece a moment.

"I could easily break it off," she said to herself. "He'd be awfully cut up, but he wouldn't be very surprised. I hate to be poor. I'm certain I should get sick of him if we had to study every sixpence."

She turned away and began to uncoil her beautiful hair.

"He didn't look sorry when I told him," she mused, "but that doesn't go for much."

A little later she looked again at the photo and a dangerous smile played about her mouth.

"I suppose if it came to that," she said, "I should let you and a good deal more go, for the sake of Tom Whitehead."

* * * * *

Three weeks passed quickly and Easter drew near. Tom was very undecided whether to remain or not. A very gay programme had been arranged, and every room in the house was taken, beside several outside.

The Monday before Good Friday, Joe and Mrs. Wattham openly tried persuasion, but he would not

compromise himself, saying he would perhaps decide the following evening.

The past fortnight had considerably strengthened the friendship between these three, and they were now constantly together.

Joe sometimes got black looks from Elsie Wattham, but she paid small heed to them, because she considered Tom just as much her friend as the pretty widow's. He had, in fact, blossomed out a good deal under her enlivening influence, and they were the best friends in the world, though somehow they rarely found themselves far distant from Mrs. Wattham.

Not that they minded, for she still continued as charming as ever, and Tom often thought how lost he would be without her.

For Joe had other friends beside her father, to whom she was devoted in her own fashion; whereas Elsie Wattham had no one else but herself to consider. So they bicycled together, and took their waters together, always in the spirit of excellent comradeship.

Once or twice Tom tried to talk to her about her *fiancé* and her future, but after her first confidence, she had grown strangely reserved about him, and tactfully changed the subject. On one occasion, however, she let Tom see she was vexed with him in some way, but she only made one or two vague remarks, finishing up with the sentence:

"It's all very fine, but there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip."

Another time she told him she did not think it was possible for her to be a poor man's wife, adding, after a pause: "I think it was largely for the sake of peace and quietness I consented to try. Basil was so determined."

Tom did not reply, and she grew bright and entertaining again, winning his gratitude by making the time fly, and her kind consideration for his health. For he was not by any means well and often suffered a good deal of pain. On these occasions she was at her very best, and he was more than grateful. In fact, he was beginning to look for her almost hourly, and to think with real regret of their parting. Yet, though he was dangerously near becoming so, he was not in love with her. He hardly knew why, but he was vaguely conscious of something that, in spite of everything, almost repulsed him when he stopped to consider it—something owing to the attention she lavished on him, and received from him, although she openly confessed herself engaged to another man.

For men are not blind to these things, although they often pretend to regard them lightly. No woman raises herself in a man's eyes by seeming to treat her lover lightly, or thoughtlessly, though many women appear to think that this is highly commendable. When she casually asked him to stay over Easter he demurred.

He did not know whether he wanted to stay or not. They were sitting in the winter-garden listening to some music. Elsie Wattham had some fancy work in her hands, and he was lying on a lounge chair idly watching her. She was telling him what took place during the festive week and painting it in very glowing colours. He was listening with interest, and spoke as if he had almost decided to stay.

"The dances are very good fun," she said; "you see, there are no duty dances at all, and if you happen to find a partner whose step suits yours better than anyone else's, you can have half the programme together."

They had danced together the previous Saturday evening, and both enjoyed it thoroughly.

"That is the principal inducement," he said, "if I was sure I might have half yours. And most of the rest with Joe," he added, after a slight pause.

She smiled a little but did not reply, and the question was left there.

Later on Joe had her turn.

"It's all rot," she said, "you're not going. You can just as well stay now you're here. What on earth do you want to run away for just when all the fun's coming on. You'll have a ripping time if you stay. I know two or three awfully nice men coming, and some nice girls too. I guess we shall make things hum between us," she finished with inward relish.

"I'll decide to-morrow evening," he said; "it rather depends upon the letters I get to-morrow. I should like to stay, if only for the sake of the dancing."

"Of course. It's a tip-top floor, and there'll be plenty of nice partners."

Elsie Wattham went to bed a little anxious that night. She had not expected him to demur about staying. She thought he would do so willingly if he could. She wondered a little if her engagement were partly the reason, and her mind took a resentful turn towards the original of the portrait still standing on her chimney-piece.

"I thing I'll break it off to-morrow," she mused, "at any rate I will if Mr. Whitehead stays for Easter."

The following morning she went to Leeds for the day to do some shopping, and as Joe and her father took a trip to Bolton Abbey, Tom was left to his own resources. He read the paper first and then strolled into the hall and stood a few moments in the porch, lounging with his hands in his pockets and a cigarette in his mouth. He felt quite lost without Mrs. Wattham or Joe, and the place looked deserted, nearly everyone having been tempted abroad by the bright sunshine.

Presently a hired carriage with luggage on it, came slowly up the hill to the hydro. It came at a crawling pace, and as it drew near, he was able to take a long look at the occupants without their seeing him.

They were two girls dressed in deep mourning, the one considerably older than the other. The elder girl was tall and striking-looking. She had hair so light that it was almost white, and it was arranged in massive coils about a shapely head. The unrelieved gloom of her dress only made it fairer, at the same time enhancing the ivory whiteness of her skin. She was not pretty, but there was something about her face better than mere prettiness, and strangers were generally drawn to look at her twice. The other girl was evidently a great invalid, and looked about fifteen, being small and fragile for that. When the carriage stopped, the elder sister—for the relationship was unmistakable—alighted quickly.

"You must let me lift you out," she said, in a low, musical voice, "and then someone will help me get you up the steps. You won't need your crutches, will you?" putting them on one side.

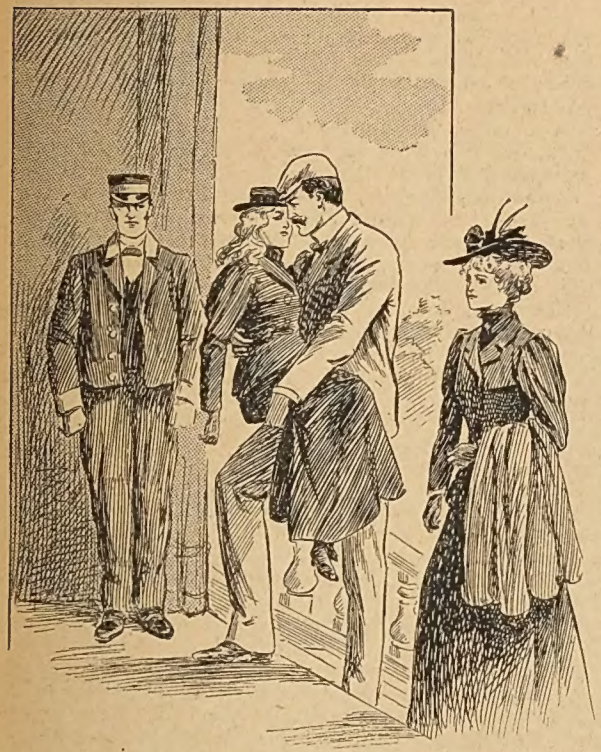
She then put her arm round her sister, and half lifted her to the ground, but finding she could hardly stand, looked round rather anxiously for the hall-porter.

He was just coming forward, but Tom was a little before him.

"Will you allow me to help you?" he asked, raising his cap.

She looked up gracefully, and he saw she had large grey eyes of great depth and sweetness.

"Thank you very much," she said simply, "my sister is cramped with the long sitting. We have had a troublesome journey."



He carried her straight into the drawing-room.

"Will she let me carry her?" he asked, looking at the younger girl.

She looked up at him confidingly and murmured: "Thanks," so he took her in his arms and carried her straight into the drawing-room, laying her down on the nearest sofa. Her sister followed, and again thanked him in the same sweet voice, arranging the cushion under the invalid's head.

"Can I do anything else?" he asked half eagerly. "May I settle with the driver for you?"

"If you wouldn't mind asking the porter to, I should be very grateful," she answered, raising her eyes to his for a moment, and then lowering them again to the white tired face on the cushion.

He executed her request, and then hovered about in the hall. He would like to have returned and offered his services still further, but was afraid to seem officious. He recognised fully, as nearly everyone did who came in contact with her, that Ethel Fortescue could only be treated with marked deference.

He contented himself instead by suggesting that the invalid should be asked if she should like a glass of wine before going upstairs.

Then he fetched a paper and sat down opposite the drawing-room door.

Presently it opened and the manageress appeared. At the same moment he heard the voice he listened for, say:

"I think she would be better carried, if we could manage it. I dare say the porter will help me."

Tom sprang up instantly. He had never been so glad in his life that he was a big fellow; whereas the porter was undersized.

"If the young lady will allow me," he said, "I could easily carry her."

He stood in the doorway, and the elder girl looked up.

"Thank you," she said quietly, and he went in.

The little invalid raised her head half apologetically.

"I'm afraid I'm very heavy," she said.

"You're as light as a feather," he answered in a wonderfully kind voice, and took her up at once.

All the rest of the morning he hovered about the hall, but he had no further glimpse of the wonderful fair hair. He learnt, however, that their name was Fortescue, and the younger girl a cripple, and that they had been to the hydro before.

"They generally come earlier, while we are very quiet," the manageress told him; "but this year they were obliged to put off their visit because Miss Daisy was too ill to travel. They will remain upstairs, I expect, until the festivities are over, as they always keep to themselves very much."

Tom hoped they would change their minds this time, and watched the door all through the lunch. But he watched in vain, for the girls had their luncheon taken to their room.

In the afternoon he again haunted the hall. He hardly knew why, but he could not get the picture of the fair hair and sweet grey eyes out of his mind, and was longing for another glimpse.

At four o'clock, however, he gave up hope and retired to his favourite chair in the reading room.

Five minutes afterwards the door opened, and a woman's dress rustled lightly as she crossed to the writing-table. He looked up eagerly and saw the sight he had been watching for so long. She stood up straight and slim, half turned from him, and examined two or three pens.

The blinds were drawn, but a long line of bright sunlight had found its way through a chink, and now it rested on her hair, making it look like a halo round her pure, pale face. She sat down without having seen him, and commenced to write. Apparently the pens were bad, for she tried two or three and then got up to seek another. Tom drank in every movement eagerly. He thought she was the most graceful woman he had ever set eyes on. Suddenly she turned and discovered him. Perhaps his eyes were over eager, for she coloured slightly and withdrew her glance.

"The pens are all bad," she said. "I wonder where I could find a new one?"

"Yes, they are villainous," he replied getting up. "They ought to look after this room better. May I fetch you one from the office, or will you use my stylographic? It writes very well," and he handed it to her.

"Thanks," she said in her usual quiet manner, and took it.

"I hope your sister is feeling better," he ventured.

"Yes, thanks, she has had a nice long rest. The train always tries her very much."

Then she sat down to her letter, and Tom returned to his scrutiny undisturbed, though professedly reading his newspaper.

The moment she had finished he was on the alert again.

"Thank you so much," and she handed him his pen.

"You are very welcome," rising as he took it and adding:

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"If your sister would like to come down for a little while, will you allow me to fetch her?"

She paused a moment and rested one hand on a chair back.

Tom did not know whether to look at her hand, her eyes or her hair, but he wished he could see them all at once, for all were beautiful.

"You are very kind," she said, "but she will not come down to-day."

"Perhaps to morrow," hesitatingly.

"Nor to-morrow either, I think. We are very comfortable upstairs. Shall you be here on Thursday? Because I am sure she would like to thank you again herself for your kindness."

"Yes, I expect so, but, indeed, it was only a pleasure."

She moved forward, and he followed to open the door for her.

As she passed out she bent her head slightly in acknowledgement, and the ray of sunlight caught her hair again. When he had closed the door and again taken his seat, he felt as if the room had suddenly grown very deserted.

In the evening Joe and Elsie Wattham sought him in the winter-garden.

The latter had missed her train home, and had to have her dinner alone after the usual hour, so neither had seen him since the morning.

Joe was in high spirits after what she called a scrumptious day, and without any ceremony attacked him instantly upon the question of his departure. At first he teased her, while Elsie Wattham sat silently waiting in feigned indifference. At last she heard what she wanted, and the colour deepened in her cheeks and her eyes shone.

"Well, I'm going to stay, so will that satisfy you," he said, and Joe clapped her hands.

Elsie looked up, half expecting to meet his eyes, but he was just making a cigarette and did not see her glance. She was partially satisfied, however, and hoped great things of the next week.

That night she wrote to Basil Caird, breaking off her engagement, posting the letter early the next day.

* * * * *

Three days of hurry and bustle followed, and the Trio spent most of their time in the hall, watching the numerous arrivals. Tom was quite satisfied with the arrangment, because when Ethel Fortescue chanced to come downstairs, he was certain to see her. True, he only received a smile and a casual greeting, but he treasured them up as the best event of the day.

Elsie wondered a little and drew from him the story of their meeting, He was just as much with her as before, but his manner was more emphatically that of a friend than ever, and she began to grow secretly anxious. For she no longer hid from herself that she really loved him, whereas she could not but feel that she was still the same to him. There was no constraint and no awkwardness, he simply held out the hand of good fellowship, believing the feeling was perfectly mutual. And now, though his thoughts were perpetually elsewhere, there was nothing to interfere with their friendship, and only eyes sharpened by love could have detected the slight inflection of change in speech and glance that told so much, either for, or against.

Joe on her part endeared herself to him quite unconsciously by sharing his new interest. She had chanced to enter the lift with her one day, and raved about her with girlish enthusiasm ever since.

"The Goddess" she had named her, true to her usual habit, and she looked out almost as eagerly as Tom.

Neither of them met with much success, however, for Ethel Fortescue and her sister remained in their apartments nearly all day, merely passing through the hall when they went out.

But on Good Friday, by a curious run of circumstances, it fell out that they were all four sitting together, enjoying the spring sunshine in the garden. Joe chatted gaily to the little invalid, and made her laugh till the tears came, with her quaint description of some of the visitors, and Tom talked quietly to Ethel. She was not very communicative, seeming to prefer listening to Joe and watching her sister, but he was too pleased to be sitting near her to care much about anything else.

Elsie Wattham joined them later on, and they appeared a happy little party to those who passed backwards and forwards near them, no one dreaming of the cruel arrows Fate was sowing broadcast in their midst.

Saturday and Sunday passed uneventfully, but also without a return of Friday's good fortune. Either the sisters did not wish for companionship, or they did not care for that which offered, for they kept rigidly to themselves. Joe alone was favoured, and that on the invalid's account. Ethel invited her upstairs to tea at Daisy's request, and she was only too pleased to go. When she came down she sought out Tom to tell him all about it, little dreaming how he hung on her lightest word.

"Is Miss Fortescue coming down to the concert?" he asked when Joe paused.

"Yes, I'm going to fetch her," she replied; "we're to have a quiet corner together, but I'm sure she won't mind you joining us," and Tom's world was suddenly flooded with sunlight.

But with the realisation, the brooding shadows crept closer, and he began to feel a strange chill creeping over him, and a nameless dread.

She was so very reserved and quiet. She seemed to have built up an impassable barrier between herself and all the world, through which her steady eyes looked out, with only patient, unmovable sadness.

Tom sat back in the shadow and watched her. If he took his eyes off her face, they returned again almost immediately, drawn by an irresistible force, and he knew that he loved her with the whole strength of his being. Yet he did not seek to shew it. Something almost like reverence held him back. In the presence of the deathless sorrow in her eyes, he felt as if he were on holy ground. Even Joe was quiet and subdued, but she nestled as close as she dare to the slender blackrobed figure, vaguely conscious of a sympathy for which she did not know the cause.

Elsie sat with them too, but she kept her eyes on the platform and the performers. She was paler than usual, but otherwise unchanged.

And unknown to each, they all felt the presence of an indefinable dread hovering near.

With a bitter irony that so often seems to delight whatever power it is that rules our actions, the indefinable took tangible shape on the evening of the grand fancy dress ball.

When the dark cloud came down upon that quiet four, over two hundred people were gathered in gay costumes with radiant faces to fill the building with merriment and gladness.

At first Ethel had resolutely refused to appear; but Joe's entreaties and her sister's evident desire led her

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at last to seek a quiet corner where they could watch unobserved.

The two younger girls enjoyed it all immensely, the little invalid growing quite radiant. Joe wore a Pierrette dress and looked charming, but she was quite willing to sit out and amuse her new friend.

Ethel drew back into the shadow and her face was just a little sadder than usual. Tom was dancing with Elsie, who, as the Queen of the Geisha, carried off the palm of beauty almost unchallenged.

When the dance was over they approached the corner where the other three sat and took seats beside them. Then two partners claimed Joe and Elsie, and Tom was left alone with the sisters. Daisy talked to him delightedly, but Ethel sat pale and silent. She seemed anxious and uneasy although she tried hard not to show it. It had been impossible for her not to glean something of his feelings, and it was evident the knowledge did not gladden her. He asked her to go to supper with him, and she declined firmly. When Joe came back, however, she had to give in, for the latter had quite made up her mind to take Daisy, as soon as the rush was over, and Ethel could not very well help following on Tom's proffered arm.

So they passed through the knots of laughing, gaily-dressed dancers to the now deserted supper-room, and many pairs of eyes turned with interest to look at the tall slender woman in black, with the gleaming white neck, and wonderful hair, that gave back no answering gleams to the bright lights, yet shed a pale glory round her head.

Tom never quite knew how it happened, but by-and-bye he found himself alone with her and the room in semi-darkness, while a branching palm hid them almost entirely from view.

He needed no second thought to recognise his opportunity, and in a few minutes was pouring his love into her ears, indifferent to the little encouragement she had given him.

But she shrank from him with a pained, beseeching expression, and when he paused a moment, broke in with an earnest entreaty that he would stop. She laid her hand on his arm, and the touch, with the pallor of her face, made him suddenly dumb.

"Can't you give me even a ray of hope?" he asked at last brokenly.

"No," she replied, with the calmness of despair, "my grandmother, father and two brothers died in a lunatic asylum."

He sat as if stunned, scarcely seeming to breathe.

At last he looked up and their eyes met; but only unflinching steadfastness, and that old depth of sorrow, met the speechless misery in his.

He put his hand on hers with a sudden, passionate clasp.

"If it had not been—" he began.

"*There is no 'if,'*" she answered slowly and painfully; "there is only the plain fact. The curse must die with my sister and me."

* * * * *

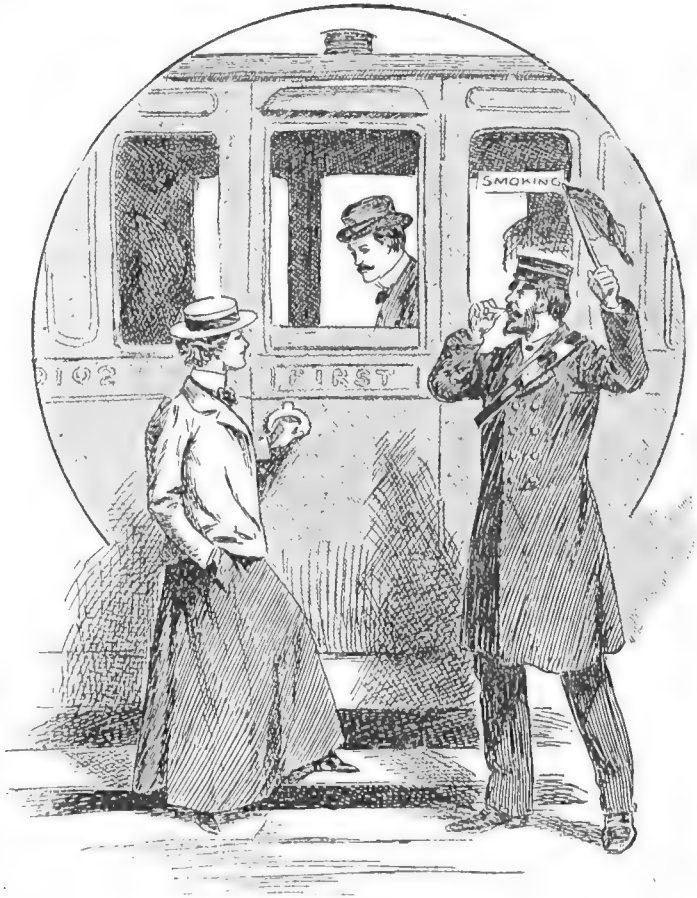
In the shadows of the winter garden Elsie found him when the evening was nearly over, and she started when she saw his face.

"Is anything the matter? Are you ill?" she asked hastily.

"No," he replied in a voice she hardly recognised; "is this our dance?"

"Yes, but we needn't dance it. I'm tired."

He seemed relieved and they sat down, but he did not speak and the wonder grew on her. Yet she did not like to question him.



"Will you send a message to Daisy Portescue?" she asked.

"Shall we get our ride to Ripon to-morrow?" she asked presently. He started a little.

"I'm so sorry," he said, "but I shall have to ask you to excuse me. I am leaving early in the morning."

She caught her breath and gripped the chair hard.

"You have decided quickly," she said, looking away from him.

"Yes."

There was a moment's pause, then he rallied himself, and, leaning forward, attempted to talk as freely as usual. She helped him as well as she could, but the effort was hardly less for her.

"I expect I shall not see you in the morning," she said, as they were saying good-night, "so this is good-bye as well."

"I'm afraid so, but hope we shall meet again. If I happen to be in Saltaire I may call, mayn't I?"

"Yes, do, and I hope you'll keep strong now. Good-bye," and turning, she went slowly upstairs.

The liveliest of the dancers were now collected in the hall, and their gay voices and laughter followed her step by step.

A scarlet Mephistopheles and a merry Bo-peep were enjoying themselves on the top stair. They moved for her to pass, and the girl exclaimed:

"Are you going to bed already, Mrs. Wattham? Hasn't it been lovely? I never enjoyed a dance more in all my life."

Elsie murmured a reply and hurried on.

She wanted to shut those laughing voices out of her ears. She felt as if she would willingly have blotted out existence itself.

Joe saw him off the next morning, although he went before breakfast. She had found him the previous night having a solitary cigar outside, and when she saw his face her quick perception told her sufficient to understand, for she had also seen them come from the supper-room together. So she had not asked any questions, but just slipped her arm through his in her frank, unconventional way, and when he told her he was leaving, asked at once if she might see him off.

"You'll write to me if you ever come near York," she said, as they stood waiting for the train, "and if father and I happen to be in Birmingham, we shall come and see you. You won't forget, will you?"

"No, I shall be delighted to see you. You've helped to make four weeks pass almost like four days."

"It ought to have been three," she remarked, looking down the line, and Tom knew what she meant.

She was standing as usual, with her fingers tucked between the buttons of her cycle skirt, blissfully indifferent to public opinion.

She looked very fresh and charming nevertheless, and he was really sorry to lose her bright companionship.

"Will you write to me?" he said. "I shall like to know how they are all getting on."

"Yes, I'll tell you all about the Lost Israelite and the Family Hope. Of course, you've asked them for their addresses?"

"Oh, yes, of course."

The train steamed in, and he took his seat.

"Will you send a message to Daisy Fortescue?" she asked, raising her clear eyes to his; "she'll be so disappointed not to have seen you."

"Yes. Tell her what you think would please her best. I should like to have said good-bye to her," and she saw him bite his lip hard.

"All right."

The guard whistled and the train moved.

"Good-bye," he said, wringing her hand till it hurt her.

"Good-bye," she answered cheerfully, "and 'Au Revoir,' if I survive Dot-and-carry-One's' arduous attentions, and the anxiety of steering my fond parent clear of a certain white-haired lady's clutches."

He smiled back at her, but it was a poor attempt at best.

"I guess I'll never meet anyone like him again," she mused, as she watched the receding train, "and the second's never like the first. Heigho!—but it's a silly old world to make such a mess of things so often."

There was a suspicious moisture about her eyes, but her hands were still tucked in those fascinating pockets of hers.

Gertrude Page.

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What Sir Clements Markham, President of the Royal Geographical Society, has to say about this.

It is the ambition of most young men to make a name in the world. Few realise what opportunities are open to them in this direction by exploring unknown tracts of the earth, and by giving their names to regions where civilised man has never trod before.

There is, perhaps, no better and surer way in which a young man may make himself famous, and cover himself with glory, than by being the first to open-up the unknown world, and thereby making discoveries which must be of great scientific value, and which may prove of vast commercial importance.

The highest living authority on the known and unknown geography of the world is, undoubtedly, Sir Clements Markham, the President of the Royal Geographical Society. The Editor of **PEARSON'S MAGAZINE** has succeeded in inducing Sir Clements to give the benefit of his knowledge with regard to the unexplored earth to the general public, and the result is an intensely interesting article in the May **PEARSON'S**, which clearly shows what vast opportunities there are for the young explorers of the day.

After describing where the principal unexplored tracts of country are to be found, Sir Clements Markham comes to the Arctic and Antarctic regions. "One Arctic achievement," he writes, "as yet incomplete, is the discovery of the Northern side of Greenland; another is the discovery of the region up Jones Sound, and north of Parry Islands; a third is the discovery of the wide region between Siberia and Prince Patrick Island. All are difficult, all would yield a rich harvest for science, and all would confer high honour on those who performed them.

"In the Antarctic region still grander work is ready for well-equipped, dauntless, and able explorers. There, an unknown continent, teeming with points of scientific interest, lies concealed behind the southern ice-pack. It has been waiting there during many centuries for the advent of the bold heroes who are destined to solve its mysteries. The time must now be approaching for the Antarctic veil to be raised."

All interested in the subject should turn for full particulars to Sir Clements Markham's admirable article in the May number of **PEARSON'S MAGAZINE**, which, it is hardly necessary to say, contains many other equally interesting articles and stories by the best writers of the day, all profusely illustrated.

My Handsome Lover.

Uncle Meriwether never liked Eustace. He never did him justice from the beginning, and when he heard that I was actually engaged to him, he spoke in such a way that I declared I would not endure it.

"I am old enough, I hope, to choose for myself," said I.

"I don't know about that, Patty," said my uncle, shrugging his shoulders.

But I remained to hear no more. I flounced into the house, slamming the door in Uncle Meriwether's honest, spectacled face, and bursting into tears as soon as I reached the sitting-room.

"It's a shame," said my sister Elspeth. "Don't cry, Patty. I'm sure the whole matter is transparent enough. Uncle Meriwether wouldn't be so domineering about it if he did not want you to marry Paul."

"I wouldn't marry Paul Meriwether if there wasn't another man in the world," said I viciously. "And I'll marry Eustace Dalzell anyhow, now. Uncle Meriwether says we don't know anything about him, but I'm sure we know enough."

That was a false assertion on my part. I only knew of my handsome *fiancé* what he himself had chosen to tell me—namely, that he was a London engineer, staying down at Wraysgeld a few weeks for his health. And his friend, Mr. Belfield, was a stockbroker. Oh, how I wished Mr. Belfield might take a fancy to Elspeth! It would be so nice to be married at the same time—to go together and live in London.

We lived together in the lonely old brick house on the edge of the moor, so that I was very glad when Olive Oat'ey came down from Binchester to visit us, and brought her wedding set of diamonds to show.

Elspeth and I looked with awe and admiration at the sparkling gems—n cklace, earrings, and brooch.

"Are they very valuable?" I asked.

"Six hundred pounds, I believe," said Olive complacently. "They belonged to Herbert's mother, and they are to be re-set before I wear them."

But just then Elspeth gave a start and turned scarlet, and following the direction of her eye, I turned and beheld Eustace Dalzell standing smiling in the doorway, with his hat in his hand.

Somehow the diamonds made me nervous, and I could not help, in the course of the evening, confiding my vague terrors to Eustace.

But Eustace laughed at me, and made light of my fears.

Eustace Dalzell went home earlier than usual that night. In my perturbation I had almost resolved to ask him to remain all night, a self-constituted guardian of our treasures, but I did not venture to do so; and so at ten o'clock we three girls, with Mary in the kitchen, were left to ourselves.

I had intended to sit awake all night, but I must have fallen into a light doze without being aware of it, for the clock was striking twelve when I started at the loud peal of the door bell below. Olive was at my side in an instant. Elspeth had her arm round me, and even Mary hobbled in with a flaring lamp in her hand.

"Go to the door, do, some of you," cried I hysterically. "Ask who it is. Ask what they want."

And while Olive, Elspeth, and the old attendant obeyed my behest I hurriedly threw on my white dressing gown and went to the head of the stairs to listen, for I felt that in an emergency like this some one ought to keep close to the diamonds.

"There is no one here," I heard Elspeth say, after the bolts and bars of the front door were withdrawn.

"Yes, there is. I hear someone groaning at the other end of the veranda," persisted Mary. "Oh, dear, the draught has blown out my candle. This way, Miss Oatley, please—I'm afraid there's been an accident or something."

The next minute the heavy oaken door blew shut with a bang. It was self-fastening on the inside. I was all alone in the house.

A rustle under the vines that draped the north side of the house—a low whistle, and I could hear a voice saying in suppressed accents:

"They're safe enough outside, all three of 'em. Now's your time. Quick!"

It all flashed upon my mind in a second—the sturdy boughs of the wistaria, which afforded so easy a ladder for an aspiring burglar to reach Olive's window—the open casement—the diamonds lying underneath her pillow. My worst fears had come true, and seizing the six-barrelled little pistol I rushed into the room just in time to see a tall figure with a mask over its face spring into the window and steal with cat-like motion across the room.

As his hand lay on the tiny canvas bag containing the precious jewels I raised the pistol and fired. At the same moment a muttered oath, mingled with a cry, sounded in my ears, and the sound of something falling shook the beams of the floor.

I am not one of the fainting kind, but for a minute or two I stood motionless. Then, springing downstairs I admitted the three eager women who were huddled at the door.

"I've shot him! I've killed him!" was all that I could say. "Run up stairs, Mary—and see if—if he is dead."

But Mary would not go alone, so we all hurried up in a crowd—and there, half-sitting, half-lying against the bed-post, with the canvas bag fallen to the floor beside him, and a red pool of blood under his right shoulder-blade was—Eustace Dalzell.

Of course, we went for help to the nearest neighbours; of course, we delivered my gallant lover, who was not fatally injured, over to the police, by whom he was recognised as an old gaol-bird, luxuriating in a new name.

D. Bristowe.

Mr. Twiller's Alibi.

THE snow had been falling for several minutes in little eddying gusts, and already an appreciable number of flakes were collecting on the cape of Miss Dorothy Dempsey's coat as she turned into the street at a swinging pace. On her head, framed by a soft halo of brown hair, in which the drops of moisture glistened here and there, a dark deerstalker hat had slipped coquettishly to one side. Her cheeks were brilliant from the cutting wind, and her eyes shone with exhilaration as she battled against the storm.

To insignificant Bertie Carey, advancing from the opposite direction, she appeared like a delightful vision, a delight considerably influenced of course by the fact that she belonged to the right "set" of visions, or Bertie, being so little a man, would not have looked a second time. Indeed, it is doubtful whether anything short of Miss Dorothy's genealogy on the maternal side would have induced him to give up his daily game of dominoes at the club and join her promenade with such urbane oblivion to the coolness of his reception.

And it is not likely that at any other time Miss Dempsey would have resented his intrusion quite so hotly; but, unfortunately for him, her memory still retained with vigour a graphic description detailed to her only the previous evening by her Cousin Jack, during which, excited to unusual emphasis by Carey's last escapade, he had gone so far as to declare him "a consummate ass, not fit for decent society." Dorothy, having agreed with him in spirit if not to the letter, felt that she was justified in taking strong measures on this occasion.

To walk down the street in his company, at an hour when her friends would be abroad and glancing curiously from their brougham windows or over their shoulders, was a reflection upon her taste and discrimination which she was not ready to endure. Accordingly, before the preliminary greetings were fairly over, she was racking her brain for some way of dismissing him. In vain she meditated a dozen clever feminine manœuvres that, under any other circumstances or in any other locality would have been practicable. It was Carey himself who finally provided her with the means of escape.

"Awfully jolly, this unexpected pleasure of a stroll with you," he murmured, ignoring the gait that was rapidly reducing him to breathlessness.

"Yes, indeed," returned Dorothy, with false serenity; "only it can't be a very long one, as I intend making a call in this street." This with unblushing effrontery, although well aware that she could walk on to the Mansion House without finding a name on her list.

"A mutual friend?" inquired Carey.

"I think not."

"This must be the house, then, since it is the last one."

Miss Dempsey gave a hasty, surreptitious glance at the window curtains and evidently found some reassurance in their design.

"Thanks, yes. I suppose you will be at the Greys? Good afternoon."

"Oh, the Greys!" cried Carey, fired to fresh recollections; "haven't you heard? Then, if I may, I will wait and see if your friend is in; if not, we can continue our chat."

Now, Miss Dorothy being an independent and somewhat peremptory young lady, and having gone to all the trouble and risk of this subterfuge, was anything but pleased at a turn which left her unwittingly outwitted. But having gone so far it was necessary to play the farce out, and ascending the steps with a good deal of suppressed indignation, she pressed the bell. The door was promptly opened by a neat capped maid.

"Is Dr. Robinson in?" she inquired glibly, improvising the first name that came to her.

"I believe so, ma'am; will you walk in?"

For an instant Dorothy wavered in total dismay. This was a contingency for which she found herself completely unprepared. Then, as her glance roved from the waiting Carey below to the girl, who had stepped hospitably back, her resolution was taken; to go in and explain, on meeting the doctor, that he was the wrong man, seemed the simplest and most natural way out of the difficulty, and it would rid her of Carey, which was the main thing.

The room into which she was ushered gave her, as a first impression, a sensation of cheer and comfort and good taste. It was fitted up as half office, half library, and a fire on the hearth shed its unstable light on two large chairs, drawn up in a suggestively confidential manner within the seductive radiance. Dorothy had made a mental comment of all this before becoming aware that one of these inviting chairs had an occupant, who had slowly risen and was now facing her with an open curiosity which he did not take the trouble to conceal. He was a tall, broad shouldered, athletic young man, with a fine blonde head, and did not in the least resemble the family physician of Dorothy's infantile ailments.

"I have been expecting you," he remarked calmly; "won't you be seated?"

"But I called to see Dr. Robinson," explained Dorothy, fully expecting him to claim the distinction.

"I am very sorry," replied the young man imperturbably: "I am Dr. Robinson's nephew, Jack Sawtelle. He was very uncertain about your keeping this appointment. In fact he went out, hoping to meet you elsewhere, but left me to receive you if you came, and gave me entire authority to act in his stead."

In the course of her life it is probable that Miss Dorothy had never experienced such a variety of emotions. That it was a case of mistaken identity, appeared plain; but how to account for her presence here, without betraying her name and her reason for ringing the bell, appeared a problem difficult of solution.

"I am sure there is some mistake," she stammered at length: "I am not the person Dr. Robinson expects. I simply wanted to consult him about a slight cold, and will call again."

"As my uncle is no longer a practising physician, I am sure that cannot have been your object." He drew himself up to his full height, which Dorothy found rather overwhelming, and adopted a sterner tone.

"Do be seated," he repeated; "this is a very serious matter and must be treated seriously. Your acquaintance with my unfortunate cousin is as well known to me in its details as to my uncle. Why try to deceive me?" as Dorothy made an attempt for a hearing.

"But I am not the person you think I am," she declared with spirit. "I am Miss Dempsey."

"Indeed! And to what reason does my uncle, an old bachelor, owe the pleasure of this visit to-day? You must excuse my ignoring the cold."

He made a quick, convincing gesture as she started, hesitated—and was lost.

"You see it is useless," he went on; "I must insist on your remaining until you have answered a few questions, but I beg that you won't force me to be more impolite than you can help."

"When will Dr. Robinson return?"

"In an hour or two, at the most. If you prefer waiting for him, that will be even better," and he drew forward one of the easiest chairs.

"But I can't stay here two hours," cried Dorothy, now thoroughly alarmed and continuing to stand uncompromisingly.

"Nor is there the slightest necessity for it. Perhaps, if I state the case, it will enable you to see that you can use the same freedom with me as with the doctor, and also, how little we require of you, provided you are honest, and how unpleasant the consequences may be if you evade. There have been great complications in two of the banks with which my cousin is connected, and actual theft has been committed. It has been proved past doubt at what hour the latter occurred, and suspicion has fallen in the highest places. My cousin will be implicated in the arrests unless it can be proved to the satisfaction of those interested that he was elsewhere at the time. By to-morrow, or at the farthest the next day, all London may know of it. For some strange reason he refuses to account for himself. Now, all we require is that you shall state under oath when and where you have seen him since Monday last."

"I don't know what you are talking about, and I don't wish to remain here any longer," protested Dorothy vehemently.

"Nonsense," replied Sawtelle, almost roughly, interposing himself between her and the door; "my uncle gave me a description of you before he left. The idea of your denying that you know Albert Twiller is absurd."

At the mention of the name Dorothy gave a little gasp of horror and amazement.

"Why, of course, I know him," she said unguardedly, and then, seeing too late that she was only strengthening his mistake, she sank into the nearest chair with a pitiful wail of distress, which did not help matters.

"Oh, this is perfectly dreadful!" she sobbed, forgetting her dignity and mopping her eyes with furtive dabs.

As for the blonde giant on the rug, he looked scarcely less uncomfortable and ill at ease.

"I don't see but that you will have to wait till the doctor comes. If I should let you go it would only mean publicity and an appearance at court and all sorts of complications, which you ought to be as anxious to avoid as we are, Miss McKinney."

"I am not Miss McKinney."

"Well, my uncle will know who you are, anyhow."

"No, he won't," thought Miss Dempsey, and relapsed into a damp and protracted silence.

"I wonder if you would believe me," she said at last impulsively, turning on him a pair of moist, indignant eyes, "if I told you exactly how I did happen to come here."

"I am dreadfully sorry. I presume I have made a mess of it," he replied irrelevantly: "perhaps we had better not try any more explanations until the doctor comes. You see, if I had known that you were in the least"—reddening perceptibly—"the least like what you are, I never should have attempted a conversation."

As Dorothy found nothing to reply to this, another half hour passed, reducing her to a state of nervousness that went far towards confirming Sawtelle in his suspicions.

At last to the infinite relief of both, a key sounded in the latch, and bowing politely at her averted head, Sawtelle hastened into the hall.

Already the doctor, a hale, hearty man of fifty, was divesting himself of his snowy overcoat, and on catching sight of his nephew he began to speak in a cheery, excited voice:

"Such a day, my boy! The jade escaped me in spite of everything and sailed on a Cunarder this noon. But that isn't the worst of it. No wonder Albert refused to say anything about her. He knew the whole thing would come out, and her testimony wouldn't be worth anything, for, you see, he has married her—married her, my dear boy, do you understand?"

As Sawtelle made no response, he glanced up hastily.

"Anything wrong?"

"Oh, nothing," replied Sawtelle, in a dramatic whisper of despair, "except that I have kept the prettiest girl I ever saw in a state of torture for two hours. She wouldn't explain who she was at first, and seemed so agitated that I never had a doubt about its being the McKinney woman. You said she was dark."

"Black, staring eyes and big as an Amazon."

"You didn't say that. This one is small and thoroughbred to the finger tips."

"Well, well, we must see about it."

And, accompanied by his anxious nephew, the doctor bustled into the room with an apologetic good will that somewhat disarmed the hauteur Dorothy was trying to assume.

"There has been a great mistake, my dear young lady, and one about which my nephew is deeply annoyed, but

you mustn't blame him, because he was only following out my instructions, although mistaken in the person. And now if you will tell me to what I owe the honour of this visit, I shall be very glad if I can retrieve in any way the discomfort you have undergone."

Thus brought to bay, nothing was left for Dorothy but to make full confession.

"I am Miss Dempsey—" she began, but was unceremoniously interrupted by the doctor.

"Not Julien Dempsey's daughter? I knew he left a widow and child. Bless me, what a coincidence! We were chums—old chums at Cambridge years ago—but go on, my child."

And then followed the whole ridiculous, mortifying tale, to which the doctor listened with open interest.

"I am glad you happened to come here," he said, quite approvingly when she had finished.

"And I hope you are going to exonerate me partially," entreated Sawtelle, who had been preparing his line of defence during the recital; "you can't fancy how humiliated I am or how tempted I was to believe you. If you hadn't acknowledged your acquaintance with poor Twiller I should have weakened at the end."

"I do know Mr. Twiller, but the acquaintance is only a superficial one. I saw him last at Mrs. Lyle's ball, Wednesday evening, and sat with him some time in the conservatory. I was upset because what you told me seemed so terrible."

"But Mrs. Lyle herself mentioned to me that he was not in the house ten minutes," interposed the doctor; "I think she was upset. She fancied him for one of her girls, and now he has thrown himself away—poor Albert!"

"Oh, I know how that happened. He told me all about it. He was going home with a Mr. Green, and after he had made his adieux, Mr. Green decided to remain, so he sat out a dance with me, and finally went off without waiting for him."

"And do you know what time that was?" inquired the doctor eagerly.

"About a quarter or half-past one, when my partner for the cotillon came up. We began to dance it about that time."

"Could you swear to it on paper?"

"Why, yes; certainly."

"Then," shouted the doctor triumphantly, "he is vindicated, whether he explains or not. This will satisfy the directors, and they will drop proceedings where he is concerned. They know already that he is not guilty. It is as plain as daylight to me now. He didn't remember the exact time he left the Lyles, and thinking he was with this woman he has married, didn't want to attract our attention to her."

"And now, if you please, I should like to go home," remarked Miss Dempsey in a pathetic tone.

"Of course, my poor child, immediately. Jack, call a cab. I will go with you myself and see your mother; also get your signature, if you will be so kind. It will straighten the affair out wonderfully. Verily, truth is stranger than fiction!"

As Dorothy swept from the room, Sawtelle made a brave, if ineffectual attempt to attract her attention, but, as she steadily refused to be aware of his presence, his conscience permitted him to retain a small, soaked wad which was easily concealed in the palm of his hand. Subsequent events have led us to believe—so tender were his ministrations and pressures between the volumes of a new set of Ruskin—that in course of time it became less like a rag and more like a respectable handkerchief.

It is now over a year since these events occurred, and we hear that the article in question, together with a number of other worldly goods, is to be delivered to its rightful owner. How it all came about, those who have not begun their love affairs with a little animosity will never be able to conjecture, but we have it direct from the lips of the round and ever rubicund Carey himself:

"The latest engagement, my deah fellah, is Miss Dempsey's to a person named Sawtelle. Why, they say he has never been to a big night in his life!"

Mary Golding.

Nina and Gugusse.

Gugusse, the favourite of the Winter Cirque, which stood in the shadow of the Kremlin, in Moscow, Russia, was not a handsome fellow. He had nei her the wit of the clown, the grace of the chariot driver, nor the versatility of the ringmaster, yet he was more popular with the Muscovites than all the three together. He owed his popularity a good deal to nature, who had sent him into the world equipped with an enormous head, large, fanlike ears, and a hunchback balanced upon slender legs, which bowed beneath their burden. He was the king of the dwarfs and the idol of the mob—for, to a mob, grace, wit and strength are nothing compared with hideous deformity.

Yet he was a man. He had passions like other men. He had a heart within his bony body as capable of human affection as that possessed by any of the public who applauded his tricks. And this heart he had thrown at the feet of Mlle. Nina, daughter of Adolphe, the equilibrist, the handsomest horsewoman in the circus.

When she appeared at the circus for the first time he was dazzled by her beauty. She danced into the ring in a cloud of gauze, among which spangles glittered like diamonds. A white rose, suspended from pearly teeth, contrasted with the rich red of her cheeks and coils of jet black hair, which streamed luxuriantly down to her waist. She was proudly, insolently beautiful, and the dwarf—whom the whim of a circus manager had taken from the cobbler's lapstone—was completely dazzled by the sight of such radiant loveliness.

As time went on the star dropped from the sky. The distance between them grew less and less as the illusion faded from his eyes. Every morning he used to see the dazzling beauty of the previous night in a dirty morning wrapper, patching her scanty wardrobe as she watched the pot boil in the open air. He began to talk

with her, and then he began to dream, and in his dreams he saw Nina walking by his side, radiant with happiness.

Nina laughed at his gibes, screamed at his jokes and shouted "Encore, Gugusse!" when the love-stricken drawf made some grotesque movement, which, he hoped, would be interpreted as an exhibition of affection. The fair horsewoman occasionally caressed him as she would a dog. He was less than a dog in the eyes of the circus people. Jealous of his popularity, they cuffed him whenever they met him, and the dwarf found it useless to protest.

One evening he told Nina that he loved her. The girl stared at him a moment as if she had not heard aright, and then burst into a fit of laughter. Gugusse frowned, and drew himself up to the full height of his little figure, hoping perchance to impress her. Then he told her how he had loved her from the moment he first saw her, and how life was impossible without her regard.

Every word the dwarf uttered was like a jest to the merry-hearted girl. She sat in her chair and shook with the exuberance of mirth. Gugusse stepped forward and took one of her white, plump hands in his horny palm. Nina jumped up with a gesture of disgust, drew her hand away, and struck the dwarf a blow in the face.

A few hours later the circus rang with cheers as Gugusse entered. But the dwarf had no heart for his work that night, and he was hissed from the ring.

The next day the circus bills bore the imposing announcement:

"Unparalleled Novelty. Stupendous Attractions. The Tragedy of Usande; or, the Martyred Maiden. Mlle. Nina and Gugusse."

At seven o'clock the house was crowded. The usual exercises took place—tight rope, trapeze, horizontal bar—but they passed almost unnoticed. The people were waiting for the promised tragedy. They wanted to see the white-robed maiden devoured by the bear.

At last Gugusse and Nina entered the ring, and the pent-up excitement of the crowd found vent in cheers. Nina was bewitchingly beautiful in her white toga, over which fell tresses of rich, dark hair. She looked like the white-souled martyrs of old, for whom the stake had no terrors. She advanced to the centre of the ring, and Gugusse, looking as hideous as the headsman of the Restoration, bound her securely to the post. Nina clasped her hands together, and lifted her large eyes skyward in an attitude of prayer.

Gugusse disappeared and re-entered the ring with a tame bear, which had been his playfellow since he left his Polish home. He held the animal by the ear, and as the brute struggled and growled menacingly, the people applauded to the echo.

They watched Gugusse approach the maiden, and heard some words uttered, which they took to be an appeal for her recantation. In reality Gugusse was murmuring a passionate declaration.

"Nina, I love you. Have pity on me. Can you not hear me? Have pity on me or I will let Biska fly at you. I have made him drink brandy, I have beaten him, and this morning I stole his meat from him. He is hungry; he is mad; he will tear you to pieces. Will you be mine?"

Nina shook her head with a gesture of impatience.

"Nina! Nina! I am a man—I have a right to love you. I love you with my whole soul. I cannot live without your love. Be mine! Do not make me desperate. Ah! you shake your head. You will not! You despise me. I know it. You shall pay dearly for it now!"

As he finished speaking the dwarf bent down and unmuzzled the furious brute, which pawed the ground viciously at his feet. Nina turned pale. There was desperation in the dwarf's face—there was murder in his eyes. Her cheeks blanched with terror, and from her lips came the cry:

"Help! help! help!"

With a rapid movement Gugusse unmuzzled the bear, and the famished animal dashed past him, sprang upon the helpless girl and rent her with his claws.

The scene was so realistic, so strikingly rendered, that the audience applauded until the circus was filled with a deafening roar. They little knew that a tragedy was being enacted, and thought it was part of the "business" when a beautiful head dropped down and blood spurted from the white, unclothed arm.

What passed just then in the mind of the wretched creature who stood watching the horrible sight? Was he conscious of his infamy? Was he seized with pity at the sight of so much youth and beauty being ruthlessly torn to pieces? Did he wish to undo what he had done?

No one can tell, but just as the bear was planting his cruel claws upon the white shoulders of the half-conscious girl, the dwarf sprang forward and seized the brute in his muscular arms. With a mighty effort he pulled the bear off his victim and flung him to the ground.

The passion which famine and excitement had aroused in the bear caused him to turn with furious force upon his master.

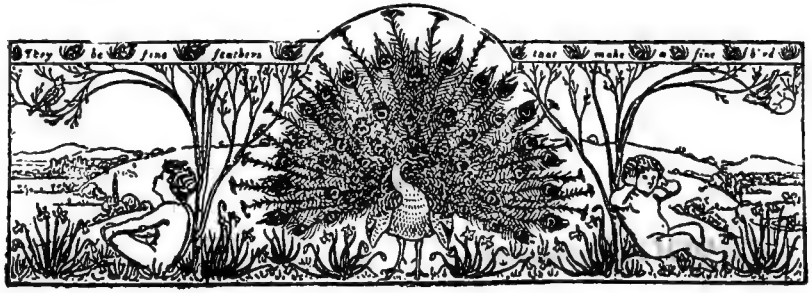
As they rolled over together in the sawdust, the bear caught the dwarf in a terrible embrace.

There was a cracking of bones, and before the people belonging to the circus could run to his aid the infuriated beast had planted his fangs into his neck.

And the crowd, little suspecting that a grim tragedy had taken place before their eyes, jumped on their seats and howled out, amid a storm of applause:

"Encore, Gugusse! Encore, Gugusse!"

B. HAGELL.



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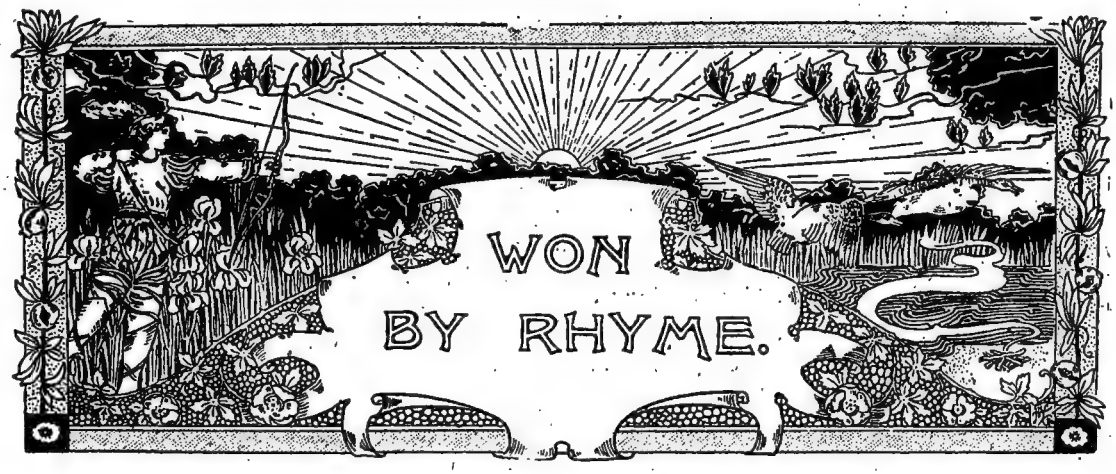
A TIP.

Don't be afraid to send only 200 coupons. Sometimes the best competitions ever devised miss fire. People say, "What is the use of my going in for it? I won't win anything." These are just the occasions on which you will. If everybody thought the same your 200 coupons would win you £100.



Her name was Potwattle, Polly Potwattle. I loved her madly; I hoped she loved me—but of that I was not so sure. She was divine; at least, I thought so. and I know my hated rival, Jack Maudle, was of a similar opinion. She had a father, and alas! a mother, to say nothing of her brother, Peter, who had a pleasing habit of borrowing half-crowns and promptly forgetting to repay them.

I did not mind this very much, as I thought the pleasure of seeing her was worth half-a-crown every time, but it got monotonous—I mean the half-crown borrowing.

My rival had been going it heavily lately, taking her (my Polly) to concerts, Sunday-school treats, and those sort of things, until I felt bad—desperate, verging on insanity. Something must be done, and at once. I must take decisive action. I must outwit my rival. I must, must! I must propose. Yes, that's it. I must propose to-morrow. Ah!

Yes, I am decided. I must propose to-morrow, but how—how shall I address my loved one? Shall I speak to her myself, or shall I let the penny post do it for me? And yet it seems a cold-blooded way to determine such a warm question. Ah! I have it; poetry—poetry. Oh! shades of Byron, cast thy mantle round me—cast, I say, thy mantle of inspiration around my unworthy shoulders, and let me address my adored, my divine and angelic Polly Potwattle, in thine own glorious and immortal language.

I got a pen and some ink; I took off my coat, bathed my head, sat down, and commenced:

> My dear Miss Potwattle, you'll see
> By this note that I'm writing to thee
> And I wish just to say, if you please,

Um! not bad for a start.

> That I love you far better than——

Um! what's a rhyme to please, please, please? For the life of me I couldn't think of anything but cheese. and it would be but a poor compliment to say I loved her better than cheese, for I don't like cheese, and my brother doesn't like cheese, and, in fact, none of our family like cheese.

No, that would not do at all. I got desperate. I thought of my hated rival, Maudle. I writhed in agony, beads of perspiration broke out upon my brow, and a mighty anger filled my soul as I imagined him at that moment with my Polly, seeking to win her love by traducing my name. In a moment of inspiration I seized my pen, and dashed off the following:

> My dear Miss Potwattle, perhaps you will see,
> On receiving this note, that it is from me.
> I want just to say that I love you far better
> Than I can express in the space of this letter.
> I love you, my angel, far better than life,
> Will you be my darling, my own little wife?
> Should your love be engaged, my rival I'll throttle
> For daring to love my own Polly Potwattle.

This was grand. This expressed my sentiments to perfection, I went to bed and in the morning concluded to go to the house, drop it in the letter-box and then run away.

I shaved, but was so nervous that my face looked like a miniature battle-field when I had finished. I dressed myself very neatly, and had no breakfast.

'Twas Saturday. I went down to my place of business, obtained a holiday, and then set off for her home—the home of my Polly—my wife that was to be.

I reached her street. I could see Potwattle Lodge, with its green railings, and then my heart failed me. Supposing someone were to open the door while I was doing the deed. Horror! I walked past the house. All was quiet. I walked past again, but my courage had not returned. For two mortal hours I did sentry business before the door of my adored one. At last in desperation I resolved to knock and make a formal call.

While knocking at the door I noticed that half-a-dozen of the green palings were broken, and the flower-bed was ploughed up as if a small avalanche had been having a picnic in the garden, and then the door was opened by the servant.

Upon seeing me, she smiled, I don't know why, but she did. Not a pleasant smile, but one that partook of a sardonic nature.

"Is—er—Miss Potwattle in?"

"Did you say Mrs. Potwattle?"

"Yes—er—that is to say—er—no—I mean Mr. Potwattle; but it doesn't matter, I will call again."

"Walk inside, sir. Mr. Potwattle is in, sir. Kindly step into the drawing-room."

I obeyed tremblingly, and when there a thought struck me—a brilliant thought. Why not trust this humble handmaiden with my precious note, ah! why not? I looked at her. She smiled. I smiled. We both smiled. I found half-a-crown and my note, and asked her if she

would execute a little commission for me. She would. Again she smiled, significantly this time, and then left the room laughing outright.

Now, why should she be so merry? I looked at myself in the the glass. I was all right. No smut on my nose. Collar right. Tie straight. Everything in order. Then the door opened, and someone entered. 'Twas her brother, Peter. Ugh! more half-crowns!

"'Ello, old boy! Glad to see yer, my pippin. Just going down to the club for 'arf an hour. Why, what's up? Yer do look glum. Lost anything on the Derby?"

I replied that I was all right, and had lost nothing on the Derby.

"Glad ter 'ear it, 'cause I was just wantin' ter borrow 'arf-a-crown for a day or two. Can you oblige me, old chap?"

I meekly handed him one, intimating at the same time that an I O U was unnecessary, as I had a small bundle at home.

"Thanks, old man. But yer are looking seedy."

To change the subject I inquired the cause of the broken palings and the ploughed flower-bed outside.

"Haw! haw! haw! such a lark. Yer know Jack Maudle? Him as was such spoons on our Polly. Well, he came last night to propose for her, and that's where the guv'nor kicked him off the top step—awful lark, wasn't it?"

I replied that "it was a most excruciating joke," and smiled funereally.

"Well, ta-ta, old boy. I hear the mater coming—bye-bye."

When he had gone I sighed deeply. I felt warm, very warm, but before I could get any hotter, Mrs. Potwattle was in the room.

She would weigh, I should think, about two hundred pounds. She hadn't got a right "h" in her constitution, and invariably substituted a "k" for any word that usually ended with a "g." But what of that? She was her mother—the mother of my soul's adoration. Hers was the hand that had fed my adored one through infancy, and nursed her through the measles. What matter if her grammar was faulty, and her pronunciation execrable? She was her mother. Surely, she could express herself in any manner she liked, so long as she made herself intelligible, and I can tell you that she was an extremely plain-spoken woman—rather too plain-spoken, I thought, at times; but, ha! ha! no matter, she is in the room.

"Good mornink, Mr. Flockintop; and to what must I subscribe the honour of a visit at so early an hour of the mornink?"

I remarked that it was a very fine day, and she replied that "she was thankful to say that she had heyes, and could see so much for herself."

This was not encouraging, and I ventured to remark that she "was looking well."

"Yes, I ham well."

Whew! I was warm. How could I come to the object of my visit? I then ventured to hope that Miss Polly was well.

"Yes, she is well."

"And Mr. Potwattle."

"Got the gout."

At this time I was in such a state of fever that I began to think a certain place must be cool compared with me. At last, with the courage of despair, I opened the question.

"I have known Miss Potwattle a long time now."

"Hindeed!"

"And the fact has also been forced upon my observation, madam, that your daughter would make a wife fit for an emperor."

"Lor! You don't say so? And now, Flockintop, is there hanythink you 'aven't noticed regardink my darter? Hif not, what may be your intentions?"

"My intentions, madam, are to offer myself as a suitor for your daughter's hand."

"Ho! hindeed; and what place are you hemperor hov?"

I was forced to confess that at present I was without that dignity, but added that I was in receipt of one hundred and fifty pounds per annum.

"And my darter, sir, spends halmost as much as that 'erself."

"But, madam, surely one hundred and fifty pounds a year would keep your daughter and myself comfortably; besides, I have expectations."

"Ho, you've hegspegtations, 'ave you?"

I then mentioned that I had an uncle in a bad state of health, and as I was his favourite nephew, I thought that it was highly probable that my name would be found in his will.

"Ho, then all you 'ave to hoffer my darter is the paltry sum of £150 and all your hegspectations 'ang on a huncle with a diseased liver?"

I intimated that such was the case, and Mrs. Potwattle then declared that "sooner than doom 'er darter to heternal misery such as I had presumed to hoffer 'er, she would rather see 'er gettink cramps in 'er jints by sitting as a hartis' model for heightpence a hour."

I was pretty cool by this time. Somehow, this woman's cold-blooded calculations cast a damper on my spirits, but I fired up for a final effort.

"Madam, I am quite aware that at present I can't offer your daughter such a home as she now occupies, but I can confidently assure you, madam, that should I be fortunate enough to gain that angel's hand, nothing shall be wanting on my part to make her life one of peace, joy, and happiness. There is an old saying, the truth of which you cannot doubt, that 'what will keep one will keep two,' and if, after a trial, we find that such is not the case, I will willingly forego my share."

"Ho! and you'll live on hair, I suppose?"

"Madam, consider. Here are two hearts bound together in the holy bonds of love; would yours be the hand to rend them asunder? Consider, madam, you were young yourself—once."

"Sir!!!"

"Oh, yes; confound it all, but you must have been!"

"Hif it is your hintention to hinsult me, sir, Hi will send Mr. Potwattle to you."

As soon as she had bounced out of the room, I sank down upon a chair in a state of abject exhaustion.

I hardly had time to recover, when I heard the step of a heavy boot, followed by the muffled sound of the gouty member—then, and not till then, did I fully realise my truly dangerous position.

However, seizing the poker and bracing my back firmly against the mantel-piece, I resolved to sell my life dearly.

The ominous clang came nearer, and then Mr. Potwattle's ruddy face, followed by his body and gout, protruded into the room.

I hardly know what I expected, as I stood stiff as starch beside the fireplace, and before I saw him shadowy visions of pistols and bowie-knives chased each other through my over-wrought brain. When, however, he entered the

room, and I saw his kind old face, and, despite the pain of the gout, the merry twinkle lurking about the corner of his eyes, I suddenly melted, dropped the poker with a crash, and hastened to place a couple of chairs for the reception of my adored's father.

"Well, Flookintop, my boy, what's all this about, eh? Been having a bout with the missis?"

I remarked that I had unintentionally aroused Mrs. Potwattle's anger.

"Ah, she's a bit out just now. That scamp Maudle came here last night and wanted our Polly, confound him! And, by gad! he got so abusive that I had to kick him out."

I ventured to ask what Miss Polly thought of the occurrence.

"Oh, Polly? She, of course, didn't like one of her admirers being hurt, and was rather down for a bit."

My spirits fell about fifty degrees.

"But she's all right now. It strikes me," he added, looking over my head, "that she is rather partial to somebody else."

My heart fell another twenty-five degrees.

"Som—somebody else?" I faltered

"Aye, somebody else. There is always somebody else, and I rather like the chap myself."

I groaned.

"Why, what's the matter with the lad? Eh, you young dog, why, confound you, what are you groaning at?"

I shook my head dismally and replied that, at one time, I had hoped to be favoured—blessed—with the hand of Miss Polly, but since there was a suitor whom the lady and her parents regarded favourably, I thought it time that I should remove myself from Potwattle Lodge, and then I murmured something about going abroad, and burying myself in some secluded spot far from the haunts of man or woman; but before I could get to the part about a welcome but untimely grave, I was interrupted by a round oath from Mr. Potwattle.

"Why, confound the fool, what does he mean?"

"Eh!"

"Why, you idiot, do you mean to say you don't know?"

I again murmured: "Eh, don't know what?"

"Why, don't you know that you are the man?"

"What!" I shouted. "I?"

"Why, yes, you. Didn't you talk to the missis about marrying Polly?"

"Yes, but——"

"But what, confound the lad! You like Polly and Polly likes you."

"But Mrs. Potwattle?"

"Oh, never mind the missis; she likes you all right, only she's too put out to show it."

I rushed over to him, kicked his gouty foot, and grasping his hand, worked his arm up and down like a pump-handle, and began to talk affection and my inability to make settlements.

"Settlements! Bosh! What other settlements can a girl want than a fine young man? You leave the settlements to me."

At this moment Mrs. Potwattle entered the room, expecting, I suppose, to find me in three pieces.

After getting over her astonishment at seeing us shaking hands so violently, we talked the matter over quietly, and the conference ended by my receiving a smacking kiss from my angel's mother.

ALFRED MATTS.

THE TRAMP'S DOG.

"HERE, Ralph! Ralph! Hi, you scamp! Come back here, sir! There, he's gone! Off for two or three days' tramp again. Beg pardon, sir! I didn't see you. I was that busy calling the dog I reckon I nearly walked over you. The matter, sir? Well, it's that dog Ralph. You heard me call him I dare say. A grander old fellow you couldn't find in a day's travel, but he has one bad habit. Most humans have more than that, and I ain't sure in my own mind that he ain't human.

"The habit? Well, it's just this: He will follow every blessed old tramp as passes here and keep following 'em, sometimes for two or three days. He's a queer one. Did you notice him just now? Didn't see him? Well, he keeps just far enough behind the fellows so they won't drive him back, sniffin' along and kind of casting his eye back to let me know he's hearing me, but not heedin' me. Just the same way he acts every time he goes off. He'll be back all right when he does come, and he's been acting that way ever since I've had him. 'Stolen?' Why, sir, I don't believe the one's livin' could steal him or fasten him up ever so tight he couldn't get back ever since, an' a right queer way I got him, too.

"Is he mine? Well, yes, in one way; an' then no, in another. It was a queer story, anyway.

"Tell it, sir? Well, if I had time I might. Ah, thank you, sir! A fine gentleman like you can afford to be generous.

"Now let me see. As near as I remember, it was June, two years ago, as I came downstairs rather early one morning to light the fire for my old woman. She warn't very strong then; the youngster there was only a couple of months old, an' as I was gettin' the things all handy for her to get breakfast. When she came down the fire was lightin' and the kettle singin'—for joy of seein' her, I'm thinkin'.

"Mollie was always a great one for fresh air; so as soon as she saw that everythin' was goin' right in the kitchen, she walks to the front door, turns the key an' opens it.

"Well, quick as a flash she came runnin' back to me with her face kind of white an' scared.

"'Oh, Jim, come out here to the door! Quick!' says she.

"An' when I followed her, blessed if I don't see the rummest sight I ever did, an' there I stood, starin' like an ape.

"You see, these seats on the porch are rather comfor'ble to sit on, an' with the vines hangin' over this way makes it 'most as shut in an' quietlike as a bedroom; then the posts here an' at the corners form good rests for the back. Well, anyhow, good or bad, right here, a-leaning back in the most uncomf'blest way, was the trampiest looking tramp I ever saw, sound asleep. An' on the seat beside him, with his head on the man's lap, was the dandiest setter I ever expect to see. A vallyble dog, sir, too, as I knew soon as I set eyes on him. I always know a good dog, being rather in the sportin' line myself, an' this was a genuine Gordon setter.

"Well, sir, I suppose I must have said somethin' with surprise for to wake them up. The dog turned the solem'est eyes round to me, askin' me not to make so much noise, an' the man, all rags an' tatters, yawned an' set up. An' then, seein' Mollie right behind me, I'll be shot, sir, if he didn't stand up, take off his piece of a hat to her, an' begin to apolergise for settin' on our doorstep. Said he'd been overcome with fateek. My eye! For the manners of him I could hardly believe he weren't a swell cove, dressed in the latest fashion, with a full-blooded stepper at the gate waiting for him.

"I know I must have stared at him considerable, but, bless you, Mollie didn't spend no time a-starin' till she'd asked him into the kitchen, an' when the breakfast was ready she gave him, an' his dog, too, a good one.

"His feet were blistered with walkin' in shoes that left half of his feet outdoors, an' half in; an' as he could scarcely take a step we made him stay with us a day or so till they got better; but he couldn't bear it, an' the only reason, I think, was that he was afraid of burdenin' us. But, Lord! He did as much for us as we did for him, I'll be bound. He filled the yard with kindlin's, an' I believe he'd a chopped all the wood in the village if Mollie hadn't seen his hands all blistered an' bleedin'. That give him away sure. 'A gentleman born,' says I to myself when I see those hands.

"Then nothin' would do but Mollie must doctor and bandage them up for him. An' while she was doin' it she heard a sound like a child tryin' not to cry, an' he just bends down an' kisses her hand, an' then he says, kind of low and choked like, more like a groan than words, 'Oh, mother!'

"An' the way the little lad took to him was a caution. A mite like he was—no sense at all; only puckered up his face and cried when I went near him. He'd smile up in Robert's face (that was what he told us to call him), an' hold on to his finger like he was his nurse.

"Now, to be sure, sir, three days don't seem much in a life, an' you'll maybe think it foolish the store we set by both man an' dog before that time was passed. Ralph would lay down beside the baby's cradle, an' nothin' would move him till his master left the room. Then he'd get up an' shake himself, as if it was time to go on, an' he was goin'.

"Mollie said he was human, an' if ever a soul gets into an animal's body—I hear there's folks as think so—there was a good soul inside of Ralph.

"Yes, we all liked Ralph, an' Robert even more. The fact is he was a real gentleman, that was plain enough, brought down as low as he was by Lord only knows what. But a true gentleman, an' I know the right kind when I see them. He never let on for one moment, though, a single word about himself but once, an' that was the last evenin' he was here.

"The dog was sittin' beside him, with his head restin' on Robert's knee, when I says, kind of sudden like:

"'I bet Ralph's a very vallyble dog, Robert.'

"'Yes, yes,' he says, sort of slow. 'Too vallyble,' stroking Ralph's head with a lovin' hand. While the dog looked at him with just as much love. 'Twas the humanest eyes you would ever see, sir.

"'He's worth a great deal of money,' he said again, after a moment's thinking. 'I am very sorry for it sometimes. I've been in many hard straits at times, an' I've been afraid—aye, afraid of myself—that I'd be tempted to sell him. Not while I was myself, old fellow, you understand, but when I was the brute I sometimes am.'

"By George, sir! you wouldn't believe it, I dare say, but I'd take my affydavy that dog looked up, sort of sad-like, and shook his head.

"To make the story short—though, all told, it was not so very long—when we came downstairs the next morning, Ralph lay on the floor guardin' his master's stick; but his master wasn't nowhere round.

"Tell me the dog didn't know! He knew as well as we did why it was done; that the master he loved an' who loved him had left him, but he had been told to watch the stick, an' with the saddest eyes and droopin' he lay there all day long. An' I truly believe if we hadn't got the stick away from him and burnt it he'd 'a' been watchin' it yet.

"An' his master? Yes, sir; gone—clean gone. An' we've never heard a word of him since. Ungrateful? No, sir; I don't take it so. I think he couldn't trust himself with the dog he loved when he was himself, you see, an' so he left him where he knew he would be well taken care of. Yes, that's the way I see it, anyhow. An' then he got so far away before the dog would quit watching that the scent was lost for poor Ralph. But he ain't never give up. Not a day, sir!

"Do? Well, there's not a tramp comes past here—an' the worse-looking they are the wilder he is to get after them, sniffin' at their tracks, and then his tail will drop so disappointed like, yet he'll keep on an' follow 'em for a day, and maybe three days, till he gets sure he ain't coming to his master, when he'll come back. Seems to me as if he kind of thought they might know him. How does he find out they don't? Bless you, sir, don't ask me, but dogs know a heap more than people think.

"He ought 'a' been named Rover, for he's been in more different places round here than I have, an' always turns up all right when he's settled the matter.

"Why! ain't that him now a-sniffin' along the other road? Of course it is. Well, now, how'd he get over there I wonder; it seems as if he was scentin' somethin', don't it?

"Hi, Ralph! Ralph! Ah! there he comes, a-boundin' along towards us just as he used to go for his master. Looks as if he thought he could find him, sure. See now! Ain't he a beauty?

"Here, Ralph! Good old fellow! Come here, sir. Eh! What! Straight for you, sir, he's gone, without a look for me! All over you in a minute! A fine gentleman like you! What! you, you, sir! Robert! Great Scott! An' Ralph knew you? Well, well: I give in. Dogs is human!"

I. J. Freshman.

From Prairie and Backwoods.

VII.—A TOUCH OF NATURE.

"If thar is one thing," said the old cattleman, with the strain of affection and respect in his tone, "which endears this yere Jack Booth to me, speshul, it is the calm, uncompromising way he lines up on what he deems his dooty.

"But where Jack shines exceedin' is when you opens a new game onto him. It is just beautiful as a mere example to men, to see the confidence with which that Jack gets a stack of chips an' sets in agin it. One hot afternoon, Enright an' Doc Peets is away about some cattle or something, but the rest of us is holdin' down the camp, we're sorter hangin' an' revolvin' 'round the post office, awaitin' for Old Monte an' the stage. Here she comes, final, a-rattlin' an' a-creakin', that old drunkard Monte a-crackin' of his whip, the six hosses on the canter, an' the whole business puttin' on more dog than a Mexican officer of revenoo. When the stage drors up, Old Monte throws off the mail bags, gets down an' opens the door, but nobody gets out.

"'Well, I'm a coyote!' says Monte, a heap disgusted, 'wharever is the female?'

"Then we all peers into the stage an' thar's jest a baby, with maybe a ten-months' start down this vale of tears, inside an' no mother nor nuthin' along. Jack Booth, jest as I says when I begins, reaches in an' gets him. The baby ain't sayin' nuthin' an' sorter takes it out in smilin' on Jack.

"'He knows me, for a hundred dollars,' says Jack, mighty ecstatic. 'I'm an Apache if he ain't allowin' he knows me. Wharever did you get him, Monte?'

"'Give me a drink,' says Monte, trackin' along into the Early Bird; 'this yere makes me sick.' After he gets about four fingers of carnation under his belt he turns in an' explains as how the mother starts along in the stage all right enuf from Tueson. The last time he sees her, he says, is at the last station back some twenty miles in the hills, at dinner, an' he s'poses all the time she's inside along of her progeny until jest now.

"'I don't reckon,' says Old Monte, lookin' gloomy like, 'as how that womern is aimin' to saw this yere infant on to the stage company none?'

"'Don't addle your whiskey frettin' about the company,' says Booth, a-settin' the kid on the bar, while we all crowds in for a look at him; 'the camp'll play this hand for the infant, an' the company ain't goin' to be in it a little bit.'

"'I wish Enright and Peets was yere,' says Cherokee Hall, 'to be heard hereon, 'cause I shore deems this a grave occasion. Yere we finds ourselves possessed of an onexpected infant of tender years, an' the question nacheral enuf now is, whatever'll we do with it?'

"'Let's maverick it,' says Dan Boggs, who is a mighty good sort of a man, but onthinkful.

"'No,' says Cherokee, 'its mother'll come hoppin' along to-morry a-yellin', you see! This yere is sabed all easy enuf. This old sot Monte has jest done drove off an' left her planted some'rs up the trail, an' she'll come along shore in time.'

"'Meantime,' says Booth, 'the infant's got to be took care of, to which dooty I volunteers. Thar's a tenderfoot a-sleepin' in the room back of the Red Light, an' he's that 'feminate an' effect he's got a sure-nuf bed an' some gooseha'r pillers; which the same I do yereby confiscate to public use to take care of this yearlin'. Is the sentiment pleasin'?'

"'Jack's scheme is right,' says Boggs, 'An' for that matter he's allers right. Let the shorthorn go sleep under a mesquite bush; it'll do him good a whole lot; for sech is life in the far West.'

"'I'm some dobersome of this play,' says Cherokee, 'Small infants is mighty mysterious people, an' thar ain't no livin' man was ever onto their game an' able to foresee their needs yet. Do you allow you can take care of this young one, Jack? Be you equal to it?'

"'Take care of a small baby like this,' says Jack, plenty scornful, 'as ain't weighin' twenty pounds averdupois? Well, it'll be some funny now if I can't! I could take care of him if he's four times as big. All I asks is for you all to stand by in crisises, an' back the play, an' you can go make side bets we'll come out winners on the deal.'

"'I ain't absolute shure,' says the postmaster, 'bein' some out of practice with infants myself, but jedgin' by his lookin' smooth an' silky, I offers fifty dollars even he ain't weaned yet; an' we leaves it to the mother when she comes.'

"'I won't bet none on his bein' weaned complete,' says Booth, 'but I'll hang up fifty dollars even he drinks outen a bottle as successful as Old Monte.'

"'I'll jest go you once,' says the postmaster, 'if I lose. Its fifty dollars even he grows contemptuous at a bottle an' disdains it.'

"Well, we all talks it over an' decides Booth is to nurse the infant, an' at once proceeds to make a procession for the tenderfoot's bed, which he resigns without a struggle. Cherokee Hall an' Boggs then goes over to the corral an' lays for a goat, which was a mother, to milk it a whole lot. The goat was mighty reluctant an' refooses to enter into the spirit of the thing, but they makes their points right along, an' after a frightful time, which now an' then demands the assistance of a large part of the camp, comes back with more'n a pint.

"'That's all right,' says Booth. 'Now go out an' tell the barkeep to give you a pint bottle. We'll have this yere game a-winning in two minutes.'

"So Booth gets his bottle and fills her up with goat's milk an' makes a stopper outen cotton cloth an' molasses for the young one to dror it through. About this time the infant sets up a yell an' ain't peaceful agin until Booth gives him his six-shooter to play with.

"'Which shows my confidence in him,' says Booth. 'There's only a few people left I care to pass my gun to.'

"Well, Booth gets along with him first rate, a-feedin' of him the goat's milk, which he goes for with avidity, tharby nettin' Booth fifty dollars from the postmaster. He has Boggs build a fire so he can keep the milk warm, an' is that earnest he don't go for no supper; jest has it brought to him.

"'Somebody'll have to ride herd on this yere foundling all night, I reckon,' says Boggs to Jack, when he's bringin' him things.

"'I s'pose, most likely, we will have to make the play thataway,' says Booth.

"'All right,' says Boggs, 'You know me an' Cherokee. We're in this any time you says.'

"So a passel of us continues along with Booth an' the infant, until maybe it's about second drink time in the night. The infant don't raise the war yell once—jest takes it out in goat's milk an' in laughin' an' playin' with Booth's gun.

"'Excuse me, gents,' finally says Booth, mighty dignified, 'but I've been figgerin' this thing an' I rather thinks it's time to put this yere young one to sleep. So if you all will now withdraw, I'll see how near I comes to bed'in' of him down for the night. Stay within whoopin' distance, though, so if he tries to stampede or takes to millin' I can have help.'

"So we all lones out an' leaves Jack an' the infant, an' turns in on faro an' poker an' similar devices which was bein' waged in the saloon.

"Maybe it's an hour when Jack comes in.

"'Boggs,' he says, 'jest step in an' play my hand a minute, while I goes over an' adjourns them frivolities in the dance hall. It looks like this yere camp was speshul tumultuous to-night.'

"Boggs does, an' Jack proceeds to the Bails House next door an' states the case.

"'I don't want to onsettle business,' he says, 'nor disturb the currents of trade, but this yere young one I'm responsible for, in back of the Red Light, gets that engaged in the sounds of these yere revels, it don't look like he's ever goin' to sleep none. So if you will jest call on the last waltz an' wind her up for to-night, it'll be regarded. The kid's mother'll shore be here in the mornin', which will alter the play all around an' matters can then go back to the old lines.'

"'Enuf said,' says Jim Hamilton, who runs the dance hall. 'You can gamble this dance house ain't layin' down none on a plain dooty, an' to-night's shindig closes right yere. All promenade to the bar. We'll take a drink on the house an' quit an' call it a day.'

"So then Jack comes back mighty grave with his cares, an' relieves Boggs, who's on watch, straddle of a chair, a-eyein' of the infant, who, a-settin' up agin a goose-ha'r piller, along of his goat's milk and Booth's gun, is likewise a-eyein' of Boggs.

"'He's a-way up good infant, Jack,' says Boggs, givin' up his seat.

"'You can bet your life he's a good infant,' says Jack, 'but it seems mighty like he don't aim' to turn in an slumber none. Maybe goat's milk is too invigoratin' for him, an' keeps him awake.'

"About another hour goes on an' out comes Jack into the saloon agin.

"'I don't aim to disturb you all,' he says, 'but, boys, if you'll jest close the games yere an' shet up the store, I'll take it as a personal favour. He can hear the click of the chips, an' it's too many for him. Don' go 'way—jest close up an' set' round quiet.'

"So we does as Jack says; closes the games an' shets up the camp, an' then sets round in our chairs an' keeps quiet a-waitin' for that infant to turn in. A half-hour later Jack comes out agin.

"'It ain't no use, gents,' he says, goin' back of the bar an' gettin' a big drink, 'that child is onto us an' won't have it. You can gamble, he's fixed it up himself he ain't goin' to sleep none to-night. I allow it's because he's among rank strangers, an' figgers it's a good safe play to stand watch for himself.'

"'I wonder couldn't we sing him to sleep?' says Cherokee Hall.

"'Nothin' agin makin' a try,' says Jack, some desperate, wipin' his lips after his drink.

"'S'pose we all goes an gives him "The Dyin' Ranger" an' "Sandy Land" for an hour or so, an' see?' says Boggs.

"So in we trails. Cherokee lays down on one side of the infant an' Booth on the other, an' the rest of us takes chairs an' sets 'round. We starts in an' sings him all we knows, an' we shorely keeps it up for hours; an' all the time that child a-settin' an' a-starin', sleepless as owls. The last I recollects is Boggs's voice in 'The Dyin' Ranger.'

With his saddle for a pillow,
An' his gun across his breast,
Far away from his dear old Texas,
We laid him down to rest.

"The next thing there's a whoop an' a yell outside. We all wakes up—all except the infant, who's wide awake all along—an' yere it is four o'clock in the mornin' an' the mother has come. Comes over from the last station on a speshul buckboard, where that old inebriate Monte drove off an' left her. Well, son, we was willin' an' glad to see her. An', for that matter, splittin' even, so was the kid."

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SEVENTH INSTALMENT.

A Romance of the Seventeenth Century.

BY JOHN FINNEMORE.

SUMMARY.

GEOFFREY HEATHCOTE, who, for political reasons, is apprehensive of pursuit, leaves Butley Croft, in Worcestershire, and makes for the heart of Wales, where he has expectations of finding a sure refuge. Travelling among the Welsh mountains, Geoffrey narrowly escapes being trapped by a gang of thieves, and on a later occasion he joins in a fight against the same gang. Geoffrey then falls into the company of a hot-headed Welshman, who picks a quarrel. They fight, and Geoffrey, who has found more than his match, is saved by a woman, who is grateful to the refugee for having saved the life of her child. Suspicious characters gather round Geoffrey. Being mounted on a superior horse the refugee easily shakes off his wretched companions, and at a later period assists two ladies in escaping from a band of thieves. Geoffrey is hospitably entertained by a Welsh farmer, and on resuming this journey he encounters a handsomely dressed Welshman. The latter upbraids the English, and they fight with swords. At a critical moment the duel is stopped by the young girl whom Geoffrey had assisted, and who turns out to be no other than his own cousin. The refugee is welcomed by his uncle, with whom he stops. Geoffrey and his cousins Enid and Owain set out on an errand of mercy and are chased by "The Red Men," who attack the house and are ultimately repulsed.

Geoffrey, who goes in pursuit of them, is shot in the head from the house, and suspects his uncle of the deed. Six Red Men are captured and hanged, and Geoffrey incurs the hatred of his uncle's menials by pleading for their lives. The place becomes dangerous to him, and he leaves. Meanwhile, his uncle has extracted from his secret pocket an incriminating letter, with which he sends one of his men to the authorities. The man, however, is captured by Geoffrey and Ieuan Gwyllt, and taken by them to the stronghold of the Red Men. While watching Nant-y-Bryn Ieuan and Geoffry see some reinforcements arrive.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FOUL PLAY.

THE next morning there was no sign of Ieuan, or, indeed, of any of the men about the place, and I saddled Whitesock and galloped off in the direction we had followed the previous day. I kept a sharp look-out as I rode over the grey, naked hills, but saw no sign of people abroad. I did not know when it was intended to beat up the quarters of the Red Men of the Dusk, and half-expected to meet scouting parties over any rise. But the mountain opened before me, mile after mile, bare and sombre and lifeless.

Within an hour I had ensconced myself among the boulders commanding a view of Nant-y-Bryn, and here I began a patient watch. I saw plenty of movement about the house, men coming and going, carrying water, and grooming horses out on the hillside before the gate, figures rambling idly, figures running busily, but among them no sign of the tall, straight form for which I looked.

Hours slipped slowly away, and I glanced at the sky and saw that the sun was at its zenith. I rubbed my dazzled eyes and turned them on Nant-y-Bryn again. A cluster of figures seemed moving in my direction through the bright fog which staring at the sun had spread before me. I shut my eyes for a few moments, then looked out eagerly. Yes, four people were walking up the hill, two and two, strolling carelessly, and Owain was one of the leading pair. They came slowly on, not heading directly towards me, but more in a line for the spinney below.

At some distance from the house they glanced back, and immediately began to walk briskly with the air of men carrying out a definite plan. From my perch I had the whole country below me, and in a moment I fancied I saw the meaning of it.

A dip in the hill had hidden them from the house, and there was now no need for them to assume a careless air. They were bent on something in which they wished to avoid interference, and knowing Owain as I did, I was half-assured what it was. I observed that they walked strictly two and two, and that there was no turning of heads as there would be were a general conversation going on.

In a short time, they passed out of my sight behind the further edge of the spinney, and I made down for the trees, leading Whitesock by the rein. I trod softly through the larches and peered out. It was exactly as I had fancied. Forty yards away the four figures were gathered on a level patch of turf. Owain and another young fellow about his own age had their coats already off and their naked swords in their hands.

His opponent and the two seconds were the young men whom I had seen riding with him on the previous evening, and I shook my head, as I thought how hot-blooded and foolish it all was. I am not one myself to always run away from the like invitations, but with such business on hand as rooting out the Red Men of the Dusk, it seemed to me a very ill time to be turning their weapons against each other.

It was true that I was biassed, for could I have enjoyed my way, I would never have had Owain go a yard from his sister until she stood in safer circumstances than the present. Yet I never dreamt of the bloody end to which matters were shortly to run, but waited to see one or other get a scratch sufficient to satisfy all parties. I have never known to this day what the quarrel was about, but that it was a trivial affair I am assured by the way the duel commenced, going forward for a time more like a calm fencing match than aught else.

This was greatly to my satisfaction, for I felt certain that first blood would settle the affair, and I observed, too, that the seconds never offered to engage, as is commonly done, in case of a serious quarrel.

Yet the tingle and grate of cold steel had, before long, its customary maddening effect. It excited me even, as I stood in shelter of the larches; how much more the actual combatants! They gradually grew warmer, the lunges came faster and fiercer; I could hear their panting breaths at each swift bound and rebound; and the formal tilting swiftly merged into deadly combat.

I watched with all my eyes, longing to see Owain safely through it, and soon I heaved a sigh of relief. There was no question as to the better man, and I saw that Owain was completely master of his opponent's play. The latter began to give ground, and Owain followed steadily up. The losing man's second, a short, red-haired fellow, began to shout and scream in his excitement, seeming beside himself at the prospect of Owain's victory.

This strange conduct in a second caused me to view him more attentively, and I discovered a great likeness between him and the fighting man. I judged them, and I found afterwards that I had judged them rightly, to be brothers.

Lunge by lunge Owain drove his opponent back, and, suddenly engaging him more fiercely than ever plucked his sword from his grasp. The defeated swordsman gave a shrill, thin cry upon finding himself defenceless, put up his hands, and cowered.

The little red fellow gave a horrible yell like a madman, leapt in, whipping out his sword as he sprang, and drove it clean through Owain's body. My poor friend, already reaching forward, dropped on his face, blindly groping on the turf with his hands, and gasping out blood and faint groans.

For an instant he was the only moving figure. My heart stood still, and I was immovable under the shock and horror of such treachery. The murderer had held tightly to his weapon and Owain's fall had plucked it out again. He looked with a fascinated eye upon the blood slow dropping from the point as if he could scarce believe that he had struck the blow; his companions were rooted to their places. With a great bound my blood raced again through my veins. I burst through the trees and darted at full speed upon the holder of the dark and smoking sword. I was not a dozen yards from him when a great shout from the other second caused him to start and look round. He leapt aside and ran from me as nimbly as a hare. He was in light shoes and I in heavy riding-boots. I stopped and bent over Owain. The sword had been driven in under the arm-pit and had reached the heart. He was quite dead, his eyes already fixed and glazing. I closed them and stood up and drew off my boots.

"Who is this?" cried the duellist who had now picked up his weapon.

"The man who killed Owain," cried the red-haired murderer. "Do you take me?"

"We do," answered the other two.

I took his meaning also, and looked round upon Owain's second. It was clear that he considered it the best way out of the difficulty, for his sword was in his hand, and he was watching the movements of his companions, ready to close upon me with them.

Instinctively, they had spoken in English, which is used as a private language among the Welsh gentry, and so let me into their plot. They would take advantage of my appearance to slay me and represent me as Owain's murderer, righteously executed by them.

For a second my mind dwelt upon the thoughts of this story recited in Enid's presence, and backed up by the bodies of her lover and brother; then I looked about upon them in the grimmest, deadest earnest I ever felt in my life. I whipped off my coat and cast my sword belt loose. I fondled for an instant the hilt of my trusty blade, working my fingers round and round it in a tight, and yet tighter grip, then squared my shoulders and faced to my work.

I spoke no word to them. Names, were they never so truthful, were not to the purpose for the moment. Men, who could act as they were acting, would be little moved at hearing their deeds rightly described. I hoped to balance accounts with other coin.

No one had yet moved a step in my direction. I was ringed about on three sides, and it seemed as if the task was something too gross even for them to put in hand instantly. I glanced round, meeting each eye in turn, and read confidence in each cruel and curious glance that measured me.

The certainty which they felt about knocking me on the head was a point in my favour, and I decided not to await a combined attack when I must play three points at once, a thing impossible on an open field.

Turning short, I flew at the murderer to whom I was yet the nearest, and against whom my wrath burnt hottest. I was upon him with a sudden swiftness which surprised myself. My feet seemed winged; I felt not the earth under me; my name was vengeance. His small, foxy eyes burnt like coals as I leapt upon him, but he stood his ground, and prepared to receive me upon his sword-point.

Six feet from him I drove my heel into the turf and checked myself dead. He made his stroke. I beat it swiftly aside and repaid it with a famous *botte d'Espagne*, which had never failed me but once, and then with Ieuan. This fellow, however, was no wild John, and I passed his guard without a check. Yet I failed to run him through as I had intended, for he was as nimble as a wild cat and dodged the fatal blow, taking my point in his shoulder, and

Drove his sword clean through Owain's body.

that but slightly. I had no time to mend the thrust, for upon an instant, the other two ran in and I was compelled to spring back. Luckily, I had a greater reach than any of my opponents, and I kept them for a while at a distance by long, sweeping blows.

The duellist ran round behind me, shortening his weapon to drive it between my shoulders. I wheeled and slashed at him with the full swing of my arm. He raised his sword to ward the blow, and the blades clashed together, striking out red sparks.

But there was not the strength in his wrist to check my rage, and though I failed to cleave his skull, yet I laid open his forehead so that the blood poured into his eyes and blinded him. He flung himself to the earth in terror, expecting to feel my sword through him within the next moment, but his brother was too close at my back for that, and I turned just in time to ward a furious thrust.

My first fury had passed by now, and I dealt no more whirling blows at large upon my foes. Instead, I pulled myself together, drew to my hand, as it were, every trick of fence of which I was master, and felt as assured as a man could feel that within the next few minutes I should avenge my friend with my own hand.

But it was not to be. Yet the vengeance lay close enough. Twice or thrice one of them ran to get behind me to have me between two points. But I was too quick for them, and changed my ground time and again.

One of these short flights brought me to the spot where I had flung down my coat. I caught it up, rolled it round my left arm, and ran in on them as they stood together. Both sprang at me, and I aimed to take the second's point with the coat while I played the murderer, and drove my blade home.

At the very instant of attack the second changed his style, whirled up his sword, and cut me over the head. I had given up my thoughts too much to the other man, and though I raised my arm and broke much of the blow, yet it lighted fairly along my green wound, and the blood spurted as from a fountain.

The pain of a still raw wound hacked open again was most exquisite, yet for a few moments I held my ground. Then a swift dizziness came over me, and I reeled and fell. A shout of savage joy burst from the red man's lips, and he pressed forward to make his wicked plan good, when there was an unearthly scream of rage from the wood, and with a fierce thud of flying hoofs, Whitesock, her great discoloured teeth laid bare and iron heels ready for instant action, dashed in to the rescue. She was just in time, and no more. As she bestrode my body, the weapon that had taken Owain's life was levelled at mine, but her sweeping kicks swiftly drove the enemy back.

The first keen agony of the wound passed, but I felt unable to rise, so sick and giddy was I. Whitesock turned her big, bright eyes on me, and I raised my hand. She laid her velvet muzzle against it for an instant, then looked warily round again. I had left her browsing among the withered herbage of the wood, and she must for awhile have remained ignorant that I had run out into the open, or she would have followed me at once. She had evidently caught sight of me as I fell, and divined that her aid was needed.

My enemies had no pistols, and I felt as safe from their swords as if I had been in a castle, so I lay there waiting for the giddy feeling to pass off before I got to my feet.

The duellist had, by this time, mopped the blood out of his eyes, and he walked unsteadily up to his companions. The blade had taken him across the top of his forehead, and the flowing blood had coated his face. It was now stiffening and drying upon his clothes, so that his eyes seemed to glare from out a hideous red mask.

"It's only a horse," he cried. "Run in and stab him where he lies."

His brother took him at his word and ran in. He waved his sword in the mare's face as he dashed forward, thinking to frighten her from her post, but Whitesock stood steadily, her head a little down. Then, of a sudden, she reared furiously and stood bolt upright on her hind legs; to my eyes, lying directly under her, she seemed as tall as a tree. The murderer gave a loud yelling laugh, thinking she had reared to wheel round and fly, but never was a more fatal miscalculation made. The first step that brought him within striking distance saw the mare's forefeet darted at him with irresistible fury.

No boxer in the ring ever planted a blow more surely, or with a tithe of the fearful force now employed. The iron-shod hoof driven at lightning speed by the mare's tremendous strength, took him fairly in the throat, cutting short his laugh into a dreadful silence, and hurling him six or seven yards, the body rolling over and over, time and again.

The duellist dropped his sword and flew to his brother. He raised the huddled mass from the ground, then let it fall again with a loud cry. It rolled to his feet and lay sprawling in limp and uncouth attitudes. Had the murderer's neck been clothed in thrice-tempered steel that awful blow must have broken it at once, and Owain was avenged.

This cowed the courage of the remaining two, and they stood despondently over the dead body of their companion. I lifted my hand and hooked my fingers into a stirrup swinging above my face, and dragged myself up.

Whitesock stood like a statue as I scrambled to my feet, and then I leant upon the saddle, the scene before me swaying in time to the keen, darting bursts of pain which swept through my head.

Some minutes passed thus, and then voices came to my ear. I turned a little, and saw with giddy, incurious eyes a whole train of figures hastening towards us.

Then my mind cleared at a stroke as I saw Enid burst from the throng, run swiftly forward, and fling herself on the earth beside Owain's body.

A confused Babel of tongues arose, some crying out in wonder and horror, some demanding explanations, others exchanging threats; for men of both bands had come up, and the sight of their young leaders slain aroused savage wrath. I saw the tall, old man, who had been in attendance upon Enid the first time I met her, pointing and talking furiously, and gesticulating as if he had witnessed the affair and was now describing it, but I understood nothing he said.

I saw my uncle, with wondering, half-frightened glances at me, talking earnestly with the two survivors of the duelling party, but it seemed difficult to rouse them from the dull apathy into which the fall of their friend had thrown them. I saw three men of Nant-y-Bryn raise Owain's body carefully, and bear it with slow steps towards the house. Enid followed them, and I saw her face. It was white and drawn in dreadful grief; but no tear stood in her eyes. She looked towards me, and at first there was no recognition in her glance. Then the knowledge of me came into her look, and I perceived that she had never seen me before, nor dreamt that I was present. She came to a pause within a couple of yards of me, her eyes bent upon my gory face, and I lifted my hand.

"Foul play!" said I, in a voice which sounded thin and dry in my own ears. "I saw it all from the spinney there, but ran in too late to save him from the treacherous stroke. The man who dealt it lies there; he will never strike foul blow more."

The pain in my head doubled and redoubled its harsh, grinding fury. I clung tighter to the saddle; but in vain. My foothold seemed to melt away under me, and I fell unconscious to the ground.

CHAPTER XIX.

BACK AT NANT-Y-BRYN.

WHEN I came to myself, I found that I was lying on the bed in the room I had formerly occupied at Nant-y-Bryn. I believe my unconsciousness had passed off into a deep

The iron shod hoof . . . took him fairly in the throat . . . hurling him six or seven yards.

sleep, for I awoke just as one does from slumber, calm and refreshed. My head felt easy and cool, and putting up my hand, I found that my wound had been dressed.

I sat up and looked round me. A fire of turf was burning brightly on the hearth and a table and chair stood near it. I stood up and stretched myself. With the sound of my movements the door was opened and the face of Siani appeared.

"Eat, eat," said she, and pointed to the table. I stepped briskly across, for the injunction chimed gratefully with my humour. I was as empty as a drum, and as hungry as a wolf, and the table was furnished royally. I sat down and did as I had been bidden with a will. Twice during my meal Siani's peering face came at a crack of the door, and I took it for a hint that there was no time to be lost, and that she was there on guard, and I ate the faster. I stood up, feeling myself another man, and Siani's head popped in at the scraping back of my chair.

"You can walk; O yes," said she, showing a very disturbed and anxious face. I thought for a moment, since Siani's English was no easy thing to unravel, then replied, in a little wonder:

"Walk, ay, ay, quite easily."

"To walk away is the best," went on Siani, nodding at me a face which looked all the paler for the obstinate patches of red burnt into the middle of her cheeks.

I rose and approached the door, which Siani opened a little wider, yet held up a hand to forbid me passing through.

"Not go out," said she, "till the mistress bring a word."

I listened, and heard a faint tumult of voices. It sounded as if there were a rare hubbub in the hall and courtyard.

"Who are quarrelling there?" said I.

"All, all," whispered Siani. "Just going to fight."

At that moment a swift shadow flitted along the passage towards us. It was Enid herself.

"Oh," said she quickly, "I am afraid I have done you a great mischief in bringing you here." She stopped, and caught her breath, then went on: "But you seemed so weak, and I knew not what else to do. And now—they are saying the most dreadful things. I know they are not true — they are trying to screen themselves."

"I understand perfectly what you mean," I returned. "Those two whom you found with me declare that I am in the fault of Owain's death."

"Yes," she said, with a sob, "but I knew it impossible. Besides, Gwilym followed them secretly, and saw everything till Hugh Mervyn struck Owain. Then he ran back in terror and shouted it all out in the house."

"Ay, ay," said I, "and that brought you up in a body. But how do they meet the old man's testimony?"

"It is thrust aside as of no weight," said Enid, "and the only manner in which concord can be restored is to turn the whole force of vengeance upon you."

"Last night makes it look the blacker, I admit," said I, seeing how natural was the outburst of fury in my direction. "But no finger was laid upon that man, none. Whitesock threw him and broke his back."

"Their rage is running higher and higher," went on Enid in a strained, hurried voice. "You must go at once or they will kill you. And it is I who have brought you into this trap. I had enough influence to get you safely here, but I fear I cannot——"

I raised the little right hand which was clenched at her side and pressed it to my lips. All my belongings had been carried to the room, and I hastily buckled on belt and sword. I looked at her, and she knew very well what I meant.

"Whitesock is safe and in the stable," she said. "Siani shall——" She paused and bit her lips for a moment. "No," she went on, "they would put her aside and refuse her. I must go myself."

Siani, who had been out in the gallery reconnoitring, now ran silently back, and spoke a few hurried words to her mistress. Enid lifted a hand in despair.

"They have set a guard at the foot of the stair," she whispered; "four men, well-armed, two of each party."

"Then they have come to an agreement," said I, "and it is time for me to move."

I ran across to the window and glanced out cautiously. Two men, carbines on shoulder, stood there talking together.

"What is the attitude of the men at the stair-foot?" I asked, moving swiftly back. Enid went herself to look upon them.

"Careless," she whispered as she returned. "One is sitting on the lowest stair, the other three leaning against the wall."

"Then they have no immediate intention of marching upon me," I remarked. "The guard is simply to make sure, and, without doubt, they believe me still unaware of their intentions. Now, if I could find anything like a rope to slide down on a side of the house where a watch is not placed, and were Whitesock set free, I should be as safe as man could wish."

"The empty room at the end of the gallery," said Enid quickly, "That is it. It has one window looking out on the north side of the house, which, but for that, is a blank wall. Come, come!"

Siani, at a word from her mistress, had disappeared, and I now followed Enid cautiously. Luckily, we had not to pass the stair head, and we soon reached the mouth of a winding passage which led to the room in question, a great bare apartment with windows looking to the north and east.

We were scarcely there when Sinai ran in, noiseless in her stockinged feet, and bearing in her arms a roll of linen cloth. It was about eighteen inches wide, and the piece was many yards long. Better stuff for the work could not be, and I seized upon it at once.

"I will bring Whitesock to that side," said Miss Vaughan.

"No, no," said I; "do not identify yourself too closely with my escape. It may be unpleasant for you in the present state of feeling."

"I!" said she. "There is no need to fear for me. Our people, though rude and rough to strangers, are faithful to their own to the last. They would slay you against my will, true; but hurt me, never."

"But," I urged, "there is no need for it. Do but turn her loose on the hillside, and she will find her way to me as surely as she has four legs under her."

Enid gravely bent her lovely head, and asked:

"How much time do you want?"

"Ten minutes," I replied.

"Then I must be instant," she returned. "Siani shall watch at the gallery, and I will take Gwilym to harness the mare. They are so engaged that I believe we can do it secretly, and get her out through the small gate beyond the kitchen without being seen."

While Enid had been speaking Siani had been following every word which fell from the lips of her mistress, and, at the mention of her post, she swiftly sped away to stand upon it at once.

Enid turned upon me a glance of farewell ere she also went, and my heart smote me bitterly for sorrow of her lonely and dismal position.

"Courage," said I, "take courage!" and I caught her hand again. "I know—why, I cannot say—but I feel sure we shall yet see happier days."

The tears welled up in her soft, dark eyes, and with a swift, instinctive movement I caught her in my arms, and showered kisses on her pale, beautiful face. For a second she held me as tightly, then firmly drew herself away, and went with a swift step to her share of the task.

When the last flutter of her dress had vanished I turned to my linen roll, and began my preparations with the easiest heart in the world. I was bound to get out in some fashion. After the promise of such happiness, was the thread of my fate to be snipped by such vindictive rogues as these? No, indeed, to use a favourite phrase of their own, no, indeed!

I gave the roll a kick and a tug and it flew across the room, leaving me half a dozen yards free to work with. I looked round for a place to fix this end, and for the moment saw nothing which could afford sufficient hold, and then the great centre beam of the ceiling caught my eye. It ran across the room from wall to wall supporting smaller transverse beams on which was laid the planking which formed the floor of the garret above. The ceiling was unplastered, and between the main beam and the boards there was a gap of four inches, the thickness of the smaller rafters.

I whipped out my sword, ran it through the end of the linen and poked the latter through one of these openings. I withdrew the point and thrust through more and more, the stiff, heavy cloth working admirably, until the end hung out over the beam within reach of my hand. I drew it down and formed a slip knot round the main line of the web, then ran the knot tight, took a good grip of the stuff gathered in my hands, and swung myself to and fro like a pendulum, my feet clear of the floor. The linen was, of course, thread, very strong, and bore the strain easily.

"So far, so good," thought I, and approached the window. There seemed no one about, and I opened one side of the wide casement. I put out my head inch by inch and saw that the coast was clear. On this side of the house was neither door nor outbuilding; the smooth mountain turf ran clean to the foot of the wall.

That eyes would be on me as soon as I moved I knew very well, but as these would be in the heads of the Red Men of the Dusk, Ieuan's scouts posted on the heights above, I had nothing to fear in that direction. I lifted the big roll of linen in my arms, and returned to the window.

I bent out and listened, and looked again and again. All was quiet, and I dropped the roll. Down it went, turning and twisting, and striking the ground with a slight thud.

So much stuff was in it that the diameter was but little reduced when it reached the turf, and it was heavy enough to lie like a plummet, keeping the length, which lay unrolled against the wall, straight and steady.

I drew my belt tighter, and threw one leg over the window. I crumpled the width of linen between my hands, and, in a second more, would have drawn over my other leg, and began to slide down, when a faint sound of voices made me pause. I turned my head and saw, to my utter dismay, three men come round the corner of the house near to me. Their heads were close together and they were talking earnestly, but in low tones, one interrupting the other, and all gesticulating fiercely as these people do when greatly excited. They were walking away from the house and, in the earnestness of their debate, looked neither to the one side nor the other.

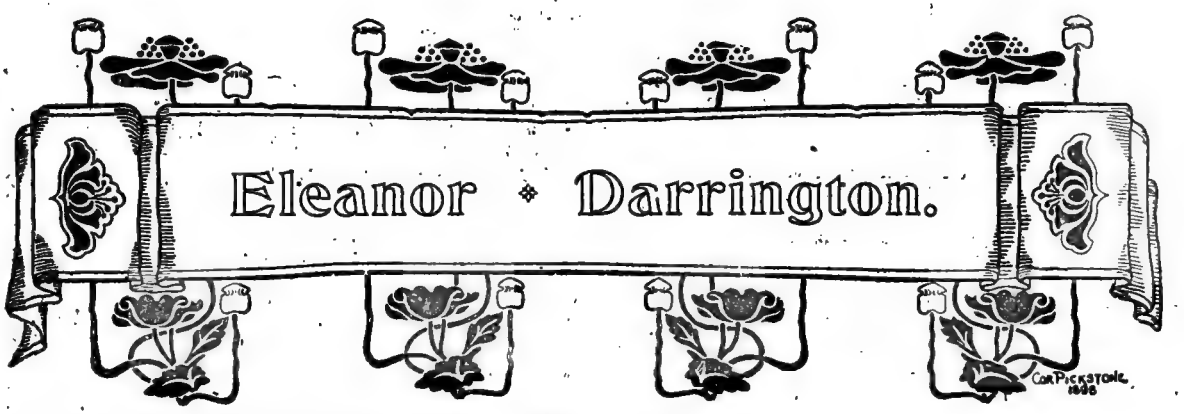
I watched them without moving a muscle. Let them go but far enough to give me a chance to slide down and gain a little law, I would trust my heels—until Whitesock could get to me—for the rest.

Had their feet but moved as fast as my heart, I had been safe beyond a doubt, but in their eager talk they lagged slower and slower and, at a dozen yards from the house corner, stopped utterly, their backs turned to me. And there sat I, astride the sill, my mind in a tangle of indecision. Twice and thrice I measured the distance with my eye, having more than half an inclination to take my chance. But the faintest sound would now catch their ears, for only one was speaking, and he softly, and the rattle of feet or scabbard against the wall would betray me at once.

A comrade out of view called upon one of the talkers by name. The halberd-bearer turned his head, shouted his wonder at sight of the linen and of me on the sill, and justified my unwillingness to trust my chances of sliding down by leaping to the foot of the wall and presenting his weapon. The second man joined him with a drawn sword, and the third ran like a hare round the corner.

(To be continued.)

Eleanor Darrington.



It had rained steadily all day, and now, at the approach of evening, though the downpour was lessening, the clouds were still black, and there seemed not the least promise of clearing weather.

"This is intolerable," and Eleanor threw up the window with a force which made Mrs. Alton start.

"Oh, you mean the rain. It is provoking, our last day here, too! How cold that air is! I believe I was almost asleep. I wonder what time it is!"

Eleanor made no reply, but remained gazing moodily out at the sea. The dashing of the waves on the beach sounded mournfully; the water shone darkly in the fast coming night. Lights were beginning to twinkle along the Spa harbour. Eleanor's face wore a strangely pathetic expression in the dim light. Her companion regarded her curiously. Was she regretting leaving Scarborough?

"No moonlight sail to-night. But, of course, Mr. Langham will come over to say good-bye," observed Mrs. Alton tentatively. There was no reply from the figure at the window.

"It must be almost time to dress for dinner. I will light the gas," and Mrs. Alton moved briskly about the room.

Eleanor left the window as a knock was heard at the door, followed by the entrance of a servant bearing a bunch of fragrant red roses, and an envelope—"For Miss Darrington."

Eleanor buried her face in the flowers an instant, and then opened the note and read:

"My dear Miss Darrington,—My disappointment is very great that the weather prevents our sail. I know that you are fond of dark red roses. Will you deem these worthy to be worn by you this evening? I shall give myself the sad pleasure of a parting call. Very sincerely yours, Albert Langham."

She handed it to Mrs. Alton, who read it very deliberately.

"Well," she paused; "I thought he would come, but what will you do with him, Eleanor?"

"I think I do not understand you."

"I mean this: he loves you and means to marry you, and——"

"Means to marry me!" interrupted Miss Darrington, haughtily. "Have I given him reason to suppose that I am to be had for the asking?"

"Oh, come, don't crush me. We are close enough friends certainly, to discuss this frankly. You must know that he—well—wants to marry you, then. Do you intend to marry him?"

"I have told you before that so far marriage has had no part in my plans of life."

"Do you mean to say that you care nothing for Albert Langham?"

"No."

"You do care for him, then?"

Eleanor raised the roses to her face, and, looking calmly at Mrs. Alton, answered:

"Yes."

Her companion smiled. "I thought so. Then you will marry him, of course?"

"I shall not marry him." She was silent a moment, and then, throwing the flowers on the table, said: "I shall tell it all to you, as I have made such an admission. Oh, I care for him,—I, who have said that no man should influence my life! I have met other men as handsome, as attractive; they did not move me. Why is it that in the course of ten short weeks he has become the centre of all to me? But it is a folly, a madness. I will not submit to it. I will crush it out. It is a humiliation."

Mrs. Alton was intensely surprised. Was this the proud, self-contained Eleanor Darrington, who was making so passionate an avowal?

She went to the window and leant out a minute; then, suddenly turning, she said:

"It sounds like the confession of some silly girl of seventeen, and I am a woman of twenty-six. Bah! What folly!" She moved restlessly up and down the room. "Love! It is an illusion—and marriage a——"

"Oh! Eleanor, don't—I——"

Miss Darrington seized her friend's hand.

"Don't look at me so reproachfully, Clara. You know what my sentiments are on this subject. I admit that Albert Langham has made a certain impression on me, aroused a certain feeling in me which people call love. But I do not believe in it; it won't last. It has been born of the charm of the sea, the delicious air, the witchery of the moonlight nights, all the beautiful things we have so enjoyed; but once I am away from all these, and from him, it will pass away."

She laughed scornfully.

"It must pass. Marry? My freedom is too precious."

She carelessly took up the roses, and said in her ordinary tones:

"How fine these are! Let us dress for dinner." Then she left the room, carrying the flowers with her.

When she appeared at dinner, she was as self-possessed as usual and radiantly lovely in a white gown of some soft diaphanous material. Two of the roses were on her bosom and another in her hair.

Bert Langham appeared later in the evening. Mrs. Alton observed the flash in his dark eyes, as they rested on the flowers in Miss Darrington's dress. On the plea of letters to be written she made her adieux, and left him alone with Eleanor. But, if anything momentous took place between them, nothing in Miss Darrington's

manner after his departure indicated it, and Mrs. Alton did not venture to question her. The next morning they left for London.

* * * * *

The marriage of Mr. Bert Langham and Miss Cecilia Dalton is to be one of the fashionable events of the coming month.

Miss Darrington dropped the paper. So he was going to be married? Well—why, what was the matter with her? She felt faint, and such a curious little thrill had passed over her.

Of course, she had known that he would. Had she not told him that she was sure that he, as well as she, would soon forget those ten weeks at Scarborough? But he had vowed—of course, he had; all men do so. How long ago was it? Why, it was nearly three years. How those last months in the South of France had dragged! How good it had seemed that morning to wake up in London!

But, what was the matter with her? She felt so languid, it must be the effects of her journey. Yet she had felt so well this morning. She would go out for a brisk walk. Yes, that was what she needed. She wished that the Altons were not away. She wondered if Clara knew this Cecilia Dalton.

As she put on her wrap she wondered if she were beautiful. Who was she? Her name was not familiar. How dull it seemed! Was the weather changing? As she walked along, Eleanor wondered where the glory of the day had gone. The morning had seemed so bright.

A gentleman coming hastily round a corner brushed up against her. His quickly spoken "Beg pardon" changed into a surprised "Why—Eleanor!" She looked up; it was her cousin, Jack Alton.

"I thought you were in Glasgow," she remarked, as she shook hands with him.

"We got back this morning. Business was pressing, and they wired me. But you do not look well. Too much Riviera?"

"How is Clara?"

"She is blooming; gone driving with the Lanes. She was not expecting you till to-morrow. She will be delighted. Come to dinner with us this evening; we will go to the Lyceum. I must rush now—man waiting for me. We shall expect you, mind."

Eleanor walked on. How rude of Jack to tell her that she was not looking well! She must take a long walk, and get up a colour for the evening. But who was this Cecilia Dalton? Yet what difference did it make? Of course he could marry whom he pleased. She had said that would get over the folly of Scarborough. Of course, she was over it. But she was disappointed. She had looked forward to meeting him and being friends; that would have been delightful. She did enjoy talking to him. He was so companionable—so—so—but that, of course, was all over, now. How tired she was! Perhaps it would be better to go home. She must not be tired in the evening.

When she reached home, she looked critically at her reflection in the mirror. Yes, she did look fagged out.

At last she fell asleep. When she awoke, it was almost dark. She was wretched. How could she endure it? She must get away from herself, the theatre was the thing.

She rang for lights, and was soon engaged in the preparation of an elaborate toilette. She would wear one of her most beautiful dresses. Jack should not again have a chance to say that she did not look well. And then, supposing that Clara should suspect? Horror! This last thought brought a spot of colour to either

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cheek, and a feeling of strength. She would look her best; her parting glance into her mirror assured her that she did.

Mrs. Alton's remarks on her appearance were satisfactory. Jack assured her that she was stunning. On their way to the theatre Jack remarked:

"I see that Bert Langham's marriage is announced for next month."

"Who is Miss Dalton?" inquired Eleanor carelessly.

"She is a Plymouth girl," returned Mrs. Alton. "She is very young, and extremely pretty. I met her last winter."

Eleanor felt a pang. "Young and extremely pretty," and she was old—twenty-nine nearly.

"Langham is dreadfully gone," laughed Jack. "He runs down to Plymouth three or four times a week."

Another pang, and he had vowed to her not three years ago! Oh, the shame of it! He had forgotten, and she—she, the strong-minded, self-poised Eleanor Darrington, who had laughed at love, was still remembering. She would not think of him; and she launched into such a brilliant flow of talk that Mrs. Alton wondered how Jack could have thought of her as seeming dull.

The opera-house was filled with a gay audience, and the overture was just beginning when they took their seats. Miss Darrington's glance wandered slowly round, smilingly acknowledged several recognitions, and then settled on the orchestra. The music was sparkling and gay, and Eleanor's spirits rose; something of her old serenity was returning. How foolish she had been to be so miserable! Of course that nonsense would pass away. Perhaps, if she had noticed an occupant of a seat to the left, just back of her, she might not have felt so confident.

Albert Langham was seated there in company with his cousin, Herbert Langham. He had seen Eleanor's entrance and his heart had given a great bound, as he saw that she was more beautiful than ever. All the old madness came rushing over him. His gaze never wandered from her face. He was in a tumult of delight at being so near her. Perhaps, perhaps, if he had braved her coldness and almost scorn of his love, he might have won; he had been too easily discouraged. Why had he let all this time pass by? Why had he not followed her? She had cared for him; she had not dared to deny it; but she had laughed at it as a folly.

He scarcely heard the music, but sat in a whirl of thought until the curtain fell at the close of the first act. The movement of the audience aroused him. His cousin left him to speak to some friends. Eleanor was laughing and talking with the Altons. How happy she seemed! Presently she looked round, and her gaze met Langham's. He bowed; she returned his salute—in a somewhat surprised manner, he thought—and then gave her attention to the stage where the curtain was rising on the second act.

Eleanor was in a rage. To think that she should see him! Of all things it was the one to upset her. What was that look in his eyes? Oh, was the misery of the afternoon coming back? But that look in his eyes! How dared he, when he was going to marry another woman? She wished the opera were over; she felt tired again, and the music was not as bright as before. The soprano was wailing over an unhappy love. How tiresome it all was! Would the curtain never fall?

But it came to an end at last, and Jack proposed that they join the promenaders. After a few turns they came upon Langham and his cousin. The latter shook hands with the Altons, while Langham greeted Miss Darrington. Eleanor answered—she scarcely knew how. She could not meet his glance, for there was that look in his eyes again. Her self-possession had utterly deserted her. The crush of the promenaders had separated them from the Altons and Langham's cousin. Eleanor vaguely wondered who the latter was. She and Langham were practically alone in an angle near the stairway.

"Ah!" he murmured, "we meet again after all these years."

Eleanor felt faint.

"I cannot, will not, believe, Eleanor, that we have met once more only that I should be again repulsed. Give me some hope. There has not been an hour all this dreary time that I have not longed for you."

Eleanor found it impossible to utter a word. She could not raise her eyes. How dared he?

"You told me that I would get over what you called a madness; but I love you more than ever. You did care a little then. Do you not now?"

Her indignation now dominated every other feeling, and found voice. She drew herself up haughtily; her eyes flashed scorn. "Sir, how dare you! You are about to marry another woman. Have you no honour?"

Here Jack's voice was heard: "Let me present Mr. Herbert Langham, Eleanor."

As the Altons came up, Miss Darrington saw that the corridor was nearly empty; the promenaders were returning to their seats:

"I have heard a great deal of you, Miss Darrington," said Herbert Langham, as he bowed low over her hand. "Mrs. Alton has been very impatient for your return to London."

Eleanor looked bewildered.

"He is Mr. Langham's cousin," exclaimed Mrs. Alton.

A sudden light burst upon Eleanor. She glanced quickly at Albert Langham; he looked amused. The meaning of Eleanor's last words to him had dawned upon him. He turned to Herbert:

"My dear fellow, we have got mixed up. Miss Darrington has just been congratulating *me* upon *your* approaching marriage"—then to Eleanor—"You see, we are both called Bert though my cousin is Herbert, and I Albert."

The Altons laughed.

"Why, Eleanor, did you really think it was Mr. Langham?" asked Mrs. Alton.

Herbert said whimsically:

"Don't you think it is hard on me, Miss Darrington, that my cousin is always Mr. Langham, and I am only Bert. But it is too much that he should receive congratulations due to me. It is I who am to marry the sweetest girl in Plymouth."

Eleanor observed that he was light and fair, and much younger than his cousin.

"We must go to our seats now," said Mrs. Alton.

"You will both join us at supper after the play," ordered Jack.

If Mrs. Alton had any curiosity in regard to the meeting of Eleanor and Langham, she made no sign.

Eleanor was in a whirl. She could not think; she dared not. Albert Langham had no further opportunity that evening of speaking to her, but the next day he went to her and demanded an answer.

"These years have proved, Eleanor, that my feeling for you is not the 'fancy' you called it. If you can tell me that you have 'crushed out' your feeling for me, I will go away and leave you. Can you?"

But Eleanor could not.

E. Z. Windsor.

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MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF THIS PAGE.

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L. T.—Yes, people who wish to live well and cheaply at the same time should go to Antioch. A gentleman tried to be extravagant there, but found it almost impossible—house-rent servants, horses, board, washing, and wine included—to spend more than £40 a year. Oh, that Antioch were London! Fancy 7½lb. of mutton for 1s., fat fowls for 2d. apiece, 70lb. of fish for 1s., and all possible fruits and vegetables sufficient for one's household for 2d. a week!

T. H.—Some 23,000 persons sleep each night on the Thames in what constitutes the port of London.

Gee.—With moderate care and good usage a horse's life may be prolonged to twenty-five, thirty-five or forty years. An English gentleman had three horses which died in his possession at the ages of thirty-five, thirty-seven, and thirty nine years respectively. The oldest was in a carriage the very day he died, strong and vigorous, but was carried off by a spasmodic colic to which he was subject. A horse in use at a riding-school in Woolwich lived to be forty years old, and a barge horse of the Mersey and Irwell Navigation Company is declared to have been in his sixty-second year when he died.

E. D.—A row of gun-cotton reaching from Edinburgh to London could be fired in two minutes, so rapid is the transmission of detonation from one part to another.

E. G.—Eight churches have stood on the site of St. Paul's Cathedral. The first one was built in the year 223.

Nose.—A Dutch physician has declared that a close connection exists between the exercise of our mental faculties and disorders of the nose. The opinion is expressed that if it were generally known how many cases of chronic headache, of inability to learn or perform mental work, were due to chronic disease of the nose, many of these cases would be easily cured, and the number of child-victims of the so-called over-pressure in education would be notably reduced. According to the above-mentioned authority, it would seem that breathing through the nose is absolutely indispensable, in order to secure the full value of the mental capacity.

T. M.—The value of the average annual productions of the earth has been estimated at £2,241,142,100.

T.—Yes, it is true that Dean Farrar once said that Cruikshank offered £100 for proof of a violent crime committed by a total abstainer, and the money remains unclaimed to this day.

Waves.—The force of waves breaking on the shore is equal to seventeen tons to the square yard.

A. P.—The apple enters more largely into folk-lore and legend than almost any other fruit. In England there was of old a peculiar dance in honour of the apple tree, and various songs were sung and bowls of cider emptied to secure a good apple harvest from the fates. In Germany the girls "snap apple seeds" on New Year's Eve to see from which direction a lover is coming. In Austria a girl cuts an apple in two at one blow, and counts the seeds. If there are as many in one half as in the other, she will marry. If they are odd, she will be an old maid. If a seed is cut in two, she will quarrel with her husband and be separated from him.

Cat.—A French scientist declares that the domestic cats of the world carry at least 30 per cent. of the common contagious diseases from house to house.

W. S.—The British Government realises something like £13,000 a year for waste paper. I am of opinion that the wasted red tape is worth much more than that.

Beard.—Among the Roman women at one period there was a morbid ambition to grow beards, and they used to shave their faces and smear them with unguents to produce these inappropriate appendages. Cicero tells us that there was a law passed against this practice, which is a proof that it must have been carried to a great extent. Among the Greeks, too, a similar fancy appears at one time to have existed, for they represented their Cyprian Venus with a beard, and Suidas asserts that false beards were more than once in vogue with the Athenian women.

Title.—Russia takes the lead. She has about 1,000,000 titled personages out of a population of 100,000,000.

Wayne.—The name of Wayne is the title of more places in the United States than any other.

Roll.—It is estimated that on an average each penny in circulation changes hands eleven times a week.

Scent.—Some people have defects in the sense of smell, which are analogous to the visual defects of colour-blind people. One healthy person, examined by an eminent scientist recently, could not distinguish the scent of violets from the totally different one of garlic or onions, though his perception and recognition of other common smells appeared to be quite normal.

Ex.—This is the curious experiment you mean: If the hands be placed for some time, the one in very hot, the other in very cold water, and both be then removed to water of an intermediate temperature, the impression made upon the heated hand will be a sensation of cold, whilst the chilled hand will feel a glow of heat from its change of situation. Persons leaving a frosty atmosphere for the shelter of a warm room thus experience pain—a prickly, tingling, and flushing of the skin—from that moderate degree of heat which is barely comfortable to those who have not been so exposed to cold. It is in consequence of a similar accumulation of excitability, resulting from the winter's inaction, that vegetation commences in the spring at a temperature which in autumn is insufficient to maintain life in the exhausted foliage.

Dis.—About 2,000 soldiers are discharged yearly for bad conduct.

Scribe.—It may be worked out in this way: A rapid penman can write thirty words a minute. To do this he must draw his pen through the space of a rod—16½ ft. In forty minutes his pen travels a furlong, and in five hours and a third a mile. We make, on an average, sixteen curves or turns of the pen for each word written. Writing thirty words a minute, we must make forty-three curves to each second; in an hour, 28,000; in five hours, 144,000; and in three hundred days, working only five hours each day, we make no fewer than 43,200,000 curves and turns of the pen.

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A MOST DELICIOUS SUMMER BEVERAGE.

It is difficult sometimes to know what to drink during the spring and summer months. This long-felt want has been met by the production of Eiffel Tower Lemonade.

Eiffel Tower Lemonade is made from the finest lemons, and the great advantage is that it is partly manufactured in Italy in the midst of the lemon orchards. The lemons are taken direct from the trees to the factory to commence their transformation into Eiffel Tower Lemonade.

You can get thirty-two tumblers (or two gallons) for fourpence halfpenny, but *be sure that you get Eiffel Tower Lemonade* when you ask for it, as its great success has brought out inferior imitations that only cause disappointment.

If you cannot get it from your grocer, send 4½d. to the makers, G. Foster Clark & Co., 115 Eiffel Tower Factory, Maidstone, they will send you a bottle post free by return.

300 BOTTLES GIVEN AWAY WEEKLY.

The firm have adopted the following novel method to induce everybody to try their Lemonade. The first fifty letters opened every day not only have the Lemonade sent by return post, but the stamps are also returned to the fortunate applicants.

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